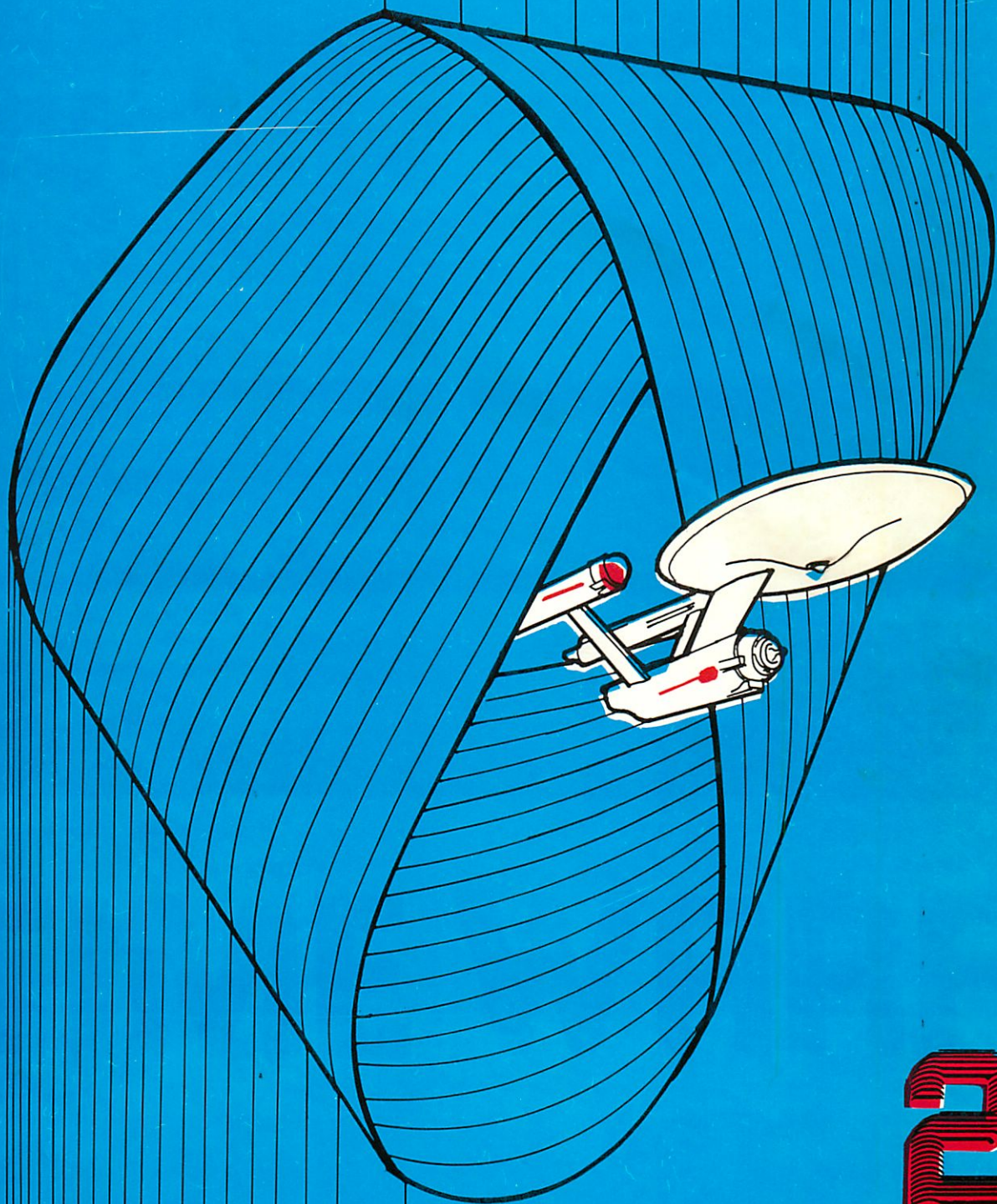


TIME WARP



2

TIME WARP 2

volume 1


isis press

issue 2

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO BARBARA WENK, WHO IS
INSANE ENOUGH TO THINK TIME WARP A GOOD ZINE!!

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outime

AN EDITORIAL

Gentle homs, femmes, and beings:

Welcome to TIME WARP 2. This welcome is slightly late, I know (so, okay. It's a whole year late. But if you knew what I'd been through, well --), but here at last. I hope you find it well worth the wait.

Actually, as I write, I am a scant two-and-one-half weeks away from my third (fourth? fifth?) deadline. I want to get this zine ready by February 15th, so it will be ready for STAR TREK Expo in New York City this February, but --- ? I have learned the hard way never to count on ~~anything~~ going according to plan when editing and publishing a zine.

Rule number one: If it can go wrong, it will -- and at the worst possible time, even right up to the day of publication.

Rule number two: don't count chickens or fanzine stories before they hatch; the minute you announce a story to appear in a forth-coming fanzine rule #1 (see above) takes over, and ---

Rule number two-a: Don't accept a story, even from yourself, on a sight-unseen or an as-yet-unwritten basis. (you see how this rule springs logically from the rules established to date?) To ignore this rule is to run into all types of problems -- and such added problems are the very last thing the harried 'zine editor needs.

(Case -- or cases -- in point. You will notice that Part Two of the "Cytherian Cycle" is missing from this issue, as are the T'Pring and the Han Solo stories originally scheduled. Yes. Well, I can explain. "Cytheria" *will* be written. It's just that right now Lareesha is giving me problems. Those of you who write know that sometimes one gets a character who is so real they 'come to life' as it were. Lareesha has done so -- and now she adamantly refuses to follow the original script I had devised for her. *She* says she wouldn't act that way, that it would be 'out of character'. She knows where she wants to go -- and it sure ain't where I want to send her! I have the distinctly lowering feeling that she'll win this battle of wills, but since this was such a good sized issue to begin with, I decided to put that epic battle off yet a bit. Hey, I never said I wasn't a coward. Just that Lareesha isn't.)

(The T'Pring novella will appear later this year as an "IDIC Special". As for the Han Solo story I promised you, well, that grew, and grew, and grew, right into the 'seed story' for my decision to make TIME WARP 3 a STAR WARS Special Issue. And, the Force be willing, it also will be out in February.)

(As of this writing, I do not know if the Kirk/Uhura horror story I wanted to bring you, "Ultima Mater", will be ready in time for publication. The story is taking longer than originally anticipated; with typing, layouts, paste-ups, and all the many other time-consuming chores that go into making a 'zine, I simply may not have the time for the final editing that this story deserves. You *will* eventually see the tale, but it may not be until TIME WARP 4 or 5. But I digress. Back to the matter at hand.)

Rule number three: If no one else manages to goof you up, the good old Post Offal can be relied on to foul up *everything* -- and at the last possible moment.

Rule number four: If you value your sanity, don't edit a fanzine; the above rules work every time.

Why, then, do we risk mental, and sometimes physical, health? What is the strange attraction drawing more and more people into the fanzine trap? There is, of course, the delightful boost to the ego at producing a fanzine in which others are able to find pleasure. There is the satisfaction at knowing you've done your best, and that that best is really quite good. There's the thrill of discovery when a talented young author or artist contacts you and you can introduce him/her to the zine-reading public.

A friend of mine once described my involvement with fanzines as an "instant get-poor-quick scheme." She was right. Editing a fanzine has got to rank with diamond-collecting as the world's most expensive hobby. But the returns I listed above, and others I've not had the time to go into, make it all worth while.

If I *didn't* edit a fanzine, how would I get to know -- even if only by phone or letter -- such lovely people as Roz Oberdieck (who managed the impossible feat of completing the gorgeous Sarek/Spock illo which opens this zine in less than two weeks when I found myself illoless at the last minute), Bev Clark, Amy Falkowitz, Virginia Lee Smith (another speed demon with the drawing pen), Carrie Rowles, Hans Dietrich, Randy Ash, Fern Marder, Carol Walske, Pat O'Neill, Eileen Roy, V.M. Wyman (a real pro in all senses of the word), Kathy Carlson (who excels at answering last minute desperate pleas for help), Allyson Whitfield, Sarah -- oh nuts! Why not just say all the wonderful artists and authors who have made TIME WARP what it is today! And of course there are also those wonderful people whose 'behind-the-scene' work has helped me so much: Barbara Wenk, Regina Gottesman, Richard Olsen, and many, many others. To all, a most sincere thank you. *You* are why I risk sanity.

the offshoot

Sarek was some meters ahead before he noticed that the shadow following him was no longer there. With the infinite patience by which he unknowingly added to his son's discomfort, he paused, and bent to examine a lavender plant growing out of the desert. When Spock caught up with him, Sarek asked him to point out interesting features of the plant, such a beautiful creation out of apparently sterile soil.

"Dost not this plant of color appear of the fertile plain?", asked Sarek, couching his question in the poetry of the *Book of Fragments*. At age seven, Spock's education in the history of his world was often taught in this manner. His mind, unencumbered by another's thoughts, would always retain these lessons. Many times Sarek had tried to make a certain point with his son this way.

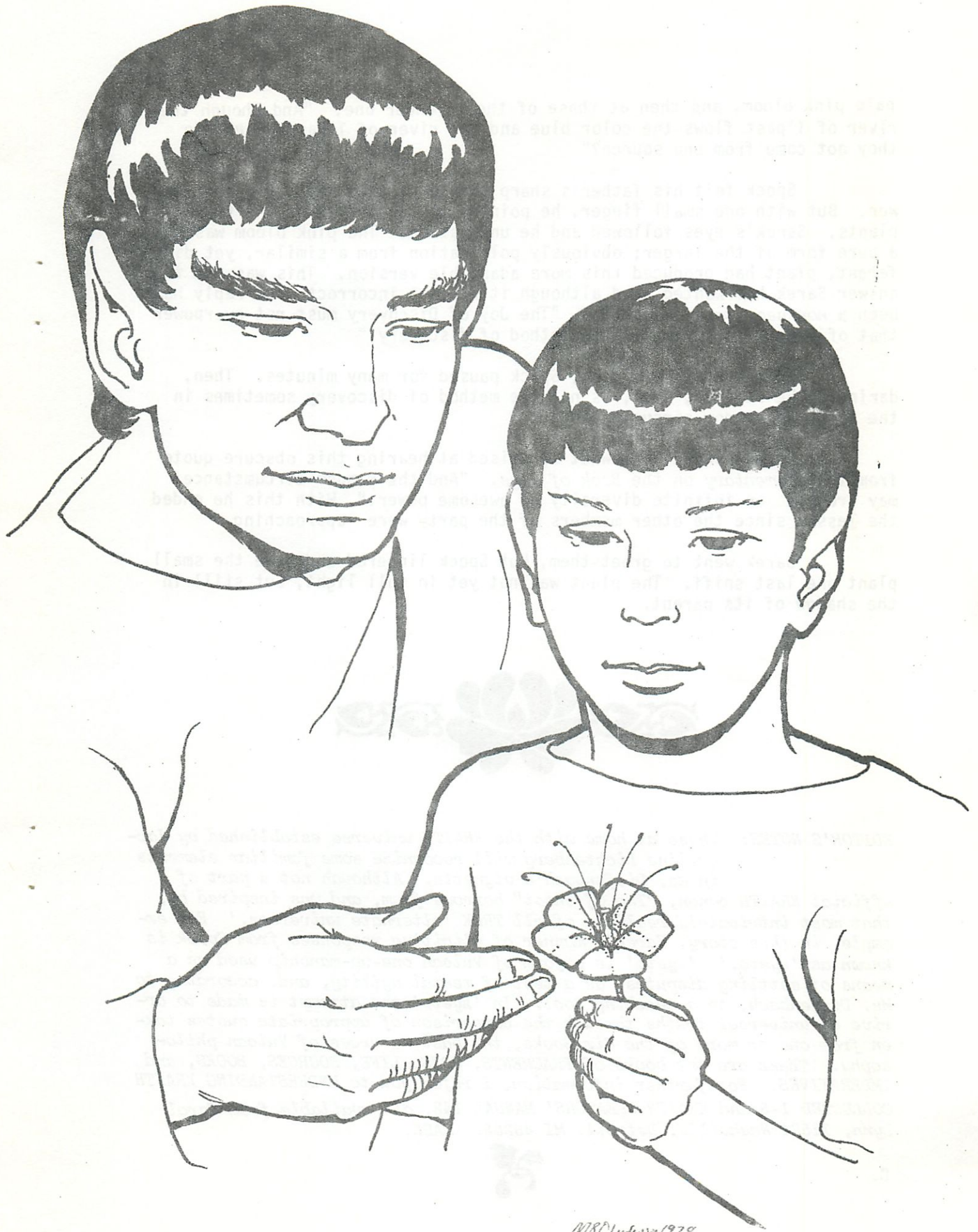
Spock knelt and looked at the plant. It was oddly constructed for a desert plant, for it had not yet evolved to the point where it could fully utilize all the water which would fall on it in a Vulcan year. The plant did, however, have an extensive root system, as the lighter soil surrounding it indicated. At its base was a smaller version of the plant, a pale pink, growing in the shadow of the larger plant. The lavender bloom gave off a sweet odor, as did the pink one, but the lighter scent of the little flower was not so readily detectable.

Spock put his head down so low to smell it that his nose brushed against the soft, pure bloom. Lifting his head, he said to his father, "And thus did appear *taesas* to Surak, for in it shone the Joy of Life."

Pleased, Sarek nodded. "Yet, if it be not what it appears, should not the Joy of Discovery induce a search for cause?" The *Book of Joys* had been collected from the legends of Surak, the philosopher and scientist. Sarek, as a member of Vulcan's Science Academy, had intimate knowledge of this particular classic.

Spock continued to examine the plant, framing a reply. Obviously his father detected some difference between the plants that he should also see. His eyebrow went up suddenly as he looked at the leaves of the

By Lucy Diefenbach



pale pink bloom, and then at those of the lavender one. "And though the river of T'past flows the color blue and the river of T'past green, do they not come from one source?"

Spock felt his father's sharp glance at this reply. Wrong answer. But with one small finger, he pointed to the leaves of the two plants. Sarek's eyes followed and he understood. The pink bloom was not a pure form of the larger; obviously pollination from a similar, yet different, plant had produced this more adaptable version. This was not the answer Sarek had wanted, and although it was not incorrect, the reply had been a *non sequiter*. He chided, "The Joy of Discovery must not overpower that of Order, for Order is the method of discovery."

Engrossed in *his* find, Spock paused for many minutes. Then, daringly, he replied, "Yet, is not the method of discovery sometimes in the power of random circumstance?"

Sarek nodded, somewhat surprised at hearing this obscure quote from the *Commentary on the Book of Joys*. "And the random circumstance may produce an infinite diversity of awesome power." With this he ended the lesson since the other members of the party were approaching.

Sarek went to greet them, but Spock lingered and gave the small plant one last sniff. The plant was not yet in full light, but still in the shadow of its parent.



EDITOR'S NOTES: Those at home with the KRAITH universe established by Jacqueline Lichtenberg will recognize some familiar elements in Ms. Diefenbach's vignette. Although not a part of official KRAITH canon, "The Offshoot" borrows from, and was inspired by, that most intricately realized of all TREK 'alternate universes.' For example, in this story, Sarek's manner of eliciting responses from Spock is known as 'zyeto.' 'Zyeto' is a form of Vulcan one-up-manship used as a means of settling disputes, as a test of mental agility, and, according to Ms. Diefenbach, as a teaching tool. In 'zyeto' the attempt is made to arrive at universal truths through the comparison of appropriate quotes taken from one or more of the Six Books, the basic sources of Vulcan philosophy. These are the books of FRAGMENTS, JOYS, LIFE, SOURCES, BOOKS, and IMPERATIVES. For further information, I refer you to UNDERSTANDING KRAITH COLLECTED 1-5 and KRAITH CREATORS' MANUAL 1&2, all available from Carol Lynn, 11524 Nashville, Detroit, MI 48205. SASE.



Meteor Made

By Beverly Clark

He'd always wondered how it would feel to be a missile falling from the heavens. He was glad that he had been given the chance to know, but he wondered still: did missiles ever feel afraid?

stars tumbling falling stumbling into my volcano and halos ever red instead of golden angels never get dizzy I bet...

Now he was turning and twisting so rapidly that stars could not be distinguished individually, and the planet below was a swift-gone blur of color. He felt a moment of pure primeval panic. *My God, it's out of control!* The glow about him burned brighter and brighter red, fading toward white on the edges, and the lurking Neanderthal within his mind glimpsed fire-devils and flaming spears drawing in on him.

the heat shield failed it wont stop turning its going to crash...

He shuddered and squeezed his eyes shut against impending death... and panic went with the hellish glow into the darkness. Reason returned. He would burn, not crash, if the heat shields failed; this problem was clearly with the gyros. He opened his eyes and looked down slightly. Just a nudge of his chin to the left...

STABILIZE STABILIZE...

and the tumbling slowed to a bearable level. Even so, he could not make out any stars -- heat haze blurred them all, and he was vaguely disappointed.

Claustrophobia had never affected him -- or he would never have been in space -- and he had seen no reason why it should now. True, the life pod was little larger than his body, and movement was greatly restricted, but it was transparent, and he had feared fearing the vastness and the multitude of stars rather than the enclosed space. But suddenly he knew how a cocooned caterpillar felt, and Alan Shepard so many years and light-years away, and that early Russian (name?) who hadn't made it... but best not to think of him, who had a metal cocoon, not a synthetic skin that let him see the hell around him...

There is no fear. There is no fear.

red to white to that color to the left of blue is something I've never put a name to think how strange it is so silent with no sound of the volcano raging like a fire fanned by a blacksmith's bellows...

His eyes were still open, and in the flaring color before them a shape formed: an anvil, a fire, and, pumping the bellows, a tall, thin figure with a crumpled leg. The figure turned, stared at him, and raised an eyebrow before disappearing into blue-white heat.

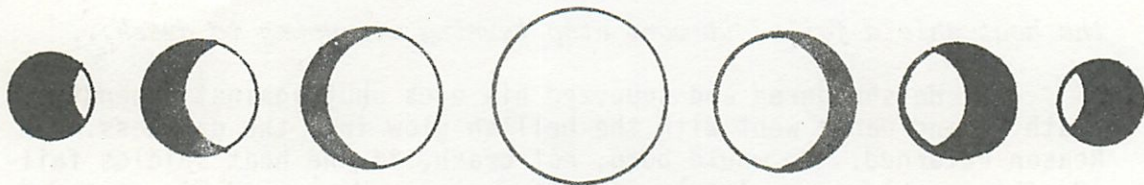
It served its purpose.

Kirk grinned, a devilish idea taking shape in his mind. He bent his chin to the right-hand switch, and let his gaze pass briefly over the banks of controls at eye-level. All normal after all.

A fuzzy voice struggled through the distorting heat haze. "Enterprise. Spock here."

"Well, Mr. Spock," Kirk said, "I'm right on schedule and she's performing beautifully, though I think you might install a viewscreen on the later models -- pity to be out here and miss the sights. And by the way, what were you doing away from your post?"

Kirk lay back, smiling slightly, and savoring the now-gentle rocking of the life-pod. Let Spock digest *that* one for a while.



EDITOR'S NOTE: This vignette, with its accompanying illustration, offers a fascinating glimpse into the type of cross-fertilization that goes on when a work in one medium is translated into another medium. The original impetus for this brief scene, states Beverly, came from her emotional response to the precedent setting cover of INTERPHASE 1. That cover pictured Kirk in a most unusual transparent protective device of some sort, adrift amid swirling clouds of vibrant color. "Meteor Made" is Bev's attempt to explain that scene, so beautifully designed and executed by Connie Faddis. The interpretive process has now been carried one step further, with Kathi Higley's intricately convoluted collage, specifically commissioned for Bev's vignette. The comparisons are, to coin a phrase, fascinating.





THE QUEST



BY

ELSPETH MOSHER

Sulu smiled contentedly. This landing party was a pleasure, not a chore. The lieutenant might be a dilettante, a faddist, but exobiology was one of his few abiding loves. This planet of silver-green vegetation and fragrant flowers pleased him. Also, though he loved his primary helm function aboard the *Enterprise*, it was good to get planet-side, among the lush plant-life, every once in a while. At least on a recon party such as this, he did not start to wonder if he were a failure in some way, if he did not quite measure up to his Captain's standards... but no, such thoughts were fruitless, paranoid...

The forest was alive with dappled shadows, gleams of sunlight, the soft whisperings of animals. Sulu breathed deeply of the cinnamon scented air. Elysia was indeed a paradise! And the plant-life! Already he had listed four species, and the bronze trumpeting vine festooning the large trees to his right appeared to be yet a fifth. He mused on possible names. *Nubian Morning Glory? Uhura's Bronze Lily?*

The forest opened into a large glade dotted with white and yellow calendula-like flowers. Several brightly feathered song-birds flitted in the honey-gold sunlight, their warbling notes washing over the young Oriental officer. A rustle in the high grass to his left drew his attention. Sulu turned his head to follow the sound, and a flash of blue caught his eye. *Another bird? he wondered. An animal?*

Sulu tiptoed in the direction of the noise and carefully pushed aside the tall, screening grasses. *Hallucination! Must be! Either that or I'm dreaming,* were his first coherent thoughts. *McCoy found me sane, stable, at my last checkup,* his unbelieving thoughts continued, *but how do I explain -- this?*

Sulu slowly released the screen of grasses. Squatting, he settled back on his haunches and changed the tricorder setting from plant to animal life. He played the tricorder in an arc in front of him. Nothing.

Was it just my imagination? Slinging the tricorder back around his shoulder, the lieutenant slowly rose to a half-crouch. Once again he parted the tall grass in front of him. Wonderment grew. Eyes wide in shocked disbelief, lips pursed soundlessly over a quickly repressed whistle of surprise, breath held lest its passage startle the object of his attention, Sulu stared at a small winged creature from a fairy-tale -- an elfin being most incongruously clad in a Star Fleet Science Officer's uniform, and with pointed ears and tilted brows.

To add the surrealistic aspect of the situation, the faerie creature was prosaically sitting on a mushroom which his numbed mind categorized almost automatically.

Slowly, afraid she would disappear if he moved too suddenly, Sulu held out a hand to the elfin being. The elf laughed, a gurgle of sound comprised of equal amounts of sunlight and April rain. Her

wings began to flutter rapidly and she lifted into the air. A blue and silver humming bird, she hung poised in the air before him. Then she made a pass with her hands, and Lt. Itaka Sulu fell forward into blackness.

*

His first conscious thought was that it was a glorious day for a quest. His second, that it was amazing he knew he was on a quest when he could not recall his name. His third was that on such a beautiful day, with such a glorious quest before him, it did not really matter *what* his name was. He was a loyal knight of the realm, there was a beautiful princess to be rescued, and he was the man for the job!

He looked around curiously. He was in a large glade dotted with white and yellow flowers. The sun beat down steadily, warming and sustaining him. The glade was peaceful, disturbed only by the quiet noises of small forest creatures. His golden steed was at the far end of the glade, and the young knight walked toward it. The horse raised its head to whinny a greeting at the approach of its rider.

Without warning, a second, almost identical glade was superimposed on his image of the peaceful area before him. The knight stopped short. Blinking his eyes rapidly, he tried to dispel the second, strangely frightening picture. He succeeded. The second scene slowly faded away and only the familiar glade remained. *Witchcraft*, he thought. *Magic. Someone is desperate to prevent my rescue of the princess.* He shook his head to dispel any remaining traces of magic and reached for his horse.

He mounted the warhorse. Once astride he unhooked his lance from his saddle. Raising the lance aloft in a gesture of defiance, he slapped his hand against the horse's neck. "On, Sunfire, we must rescue our Lady."

The horse tossed its head in response. Horse and rider then turned back to the forest. A path ran through the wooded area and the horse picked its careful way along this. The path took them deeper and deeper into the forest. The trees grew taller and thicker and the shadows grew darker and denser. The silence turned from one of peace to one of foreboding. The knight's alertness grew apace.

"Oh deary, deary me. I'll never get this load home."

He reined in his horse at the sound, the first spoken words he could remember hearing in -- how long *had* it been since he'd first started this quest? He looked around eagerly for the source of the sound. Maybe it was someone who could tell him if he were truly on the right road for the king's castle!

At first he couldn't see anyone. Then the voice spoke once a again.

"Oh deary, deary me. These poor old bones are weak to-day. My legs and arms just can't do the job. Can't do the job." He followed the voice to its source.

A tiny brown nut of a woman, wrinkled and wizened with age, was tottering along under an enormous load of fire-wood. The knight reined in his horse. "Hola, Mother. What do you there?"

The old woman stopped and turned to him. "What does it look like, Sir Knight? You surely can see that I'm trying to get home with this supply of firewood."

"May I help, Mother?"

The ancient crone didn't answer at first, but simply stood shaking her head sadly back and forth. Finally she said, "In my day, a knight did not ask permission to be gallant. He just was."

He tried to placate her. "But, Mother, I'm a stranger to your ways and customs. Let me help you now."

"Aren't you afraid to turn aside from your quest? What of your princess?"

He looked at her seriously, accepting without question her knowledge of his quest. (After all, what else would a knight in full battle regalia be doing in this wood?) "Mother, if I ignore the chance to help another, particularly one weaker than I, I am not worthy of my princess."

For a brief moment it looked as though another person looked out from the old woman's deep brown eyes. These eyes were quickly hooded, and it was only a tiny, crippled old woman standing there, bent almost double under a burden of gathered fire-wood.

The knight disembarked and went over to the old woman. Taking the bundle of faggots from her, he led her to the horse and lifted her to the saddle. "Now, Mother, what is the direction to your home?"

She pointed through the woods. A very narrow, very over-grown path led off at a right angle from the path he had been on. Resolutely, he followed it.

The second path seemed to go on forever. At times he had to draw his sword and slash the thick underbrush and the low-hanging tree branches from his way. *She would never have made the trip without me, he mused. I may be delayed, but I am glad I have the chance to help the old woman.*

They arrived at last at another clearing, this one smaller, darker, more secretive than the first. A decrepit hut, roof falling off, doors ajar, broken windows allowing the elements indoors, stood in the center of the clearing. The old woman pointed a palsied finger at the ramshackle dwelling. "There is my castle."

The young knight looked at the hut in horror. "Mother, this is no dwelling for a woman of your respected years."

"My man brought me to this home seventy years ago, young sir. I have not lived away from here since. I will not go now. Simply give me my firewood and then depart. I will be all right with a good fire to keep my old bones warm."

"And the chimney probably smokes!", the young man muttered to himself.

"Yes, it does. But I have grown used to it."

The knight looked anxiously to the small patch of sky visible through a break in the trees. It had grown darker with the passage of time. He had lost most of the day and it was now late afternoon. He felt tempted to do as the old woman asked, to carry her bundle of firewood into the house and leave.

But he could not. Stubborn and proud the old woman might be, but she needed him. He helped her down from Sunfire's back, then slung the faggots to his back and escorted her to the hut. He lifted aside the haphazardly hanging door and looked inside to be sure none of the forest denizens had decided to camp indoors in the old woman's absence. The hut smelled of smoke, unwashed clothes, rancid food, and unattended old age. But it was empty.

As royally as though she were the highest lady of the land, the knight bowed her into the hut. He made her comfortable, and started a small fire for her. Then he took off his outer armor. The old woman was unable to help him, and it was a difficult task to accomplish without the ministrations of his page, but after receiving several bruised fingers and hastily repressing the rather unknightlike language that sprang unbidden to his lips, he succeeded in removing the metal-wear.

Making do with hastily assembled and impromptu tools and supplies, the young man began effecting repairs on the run-down hut. He hung the door straight and repaired the roof, washed out the old woman's bed-linens and clothing, thoroughly cleaned out the kitchen area, and put in a supply of vegetables and produce from the small pocket-garden at the back of the hut.

All the time he was working the old woman was nattering and complaining. "It is not seemly that a knight do such work," she cack-

led. "What kind of knight are you, to know how to do woman's work, and to labor for a poor peasant woman like me?"

After the fifth such complaint, the young man calmly turned to her and said, "Mother, I am a true knight, and therefore any work that I do is seemly. This is honest labor, and its completion will make you more comfortable. Did I not swear an oath to my God that I would succor women, children, and others weaker than myself?"

The old woman was abashed, and became silent, allowing him to finish his self-appointed tasks. Night was finally upon them when he completed the last of these.

The old woman pointed to the full moon flooding the glade with a sweet golden light. "You have wasted too much time. What if another has rescued your princess?"

"If another *has* rescued her, then such is fate. But I do not think so. If the princess I am seeking is truly *my* princess, then I alone have the power to rescue her. If another has been successful in the quest, then she is *his* princess; I would have lost her even if I had not stopped to render assistance to you."

"And why *did* you stop to help me, Sir Knight? I am old, ugly, poor. I can give you naught in return. I am too ill-favored to offer you myself, too old to offer you my services, too poor to offer you gold. And all this you could have fore-seen when first you saw me."

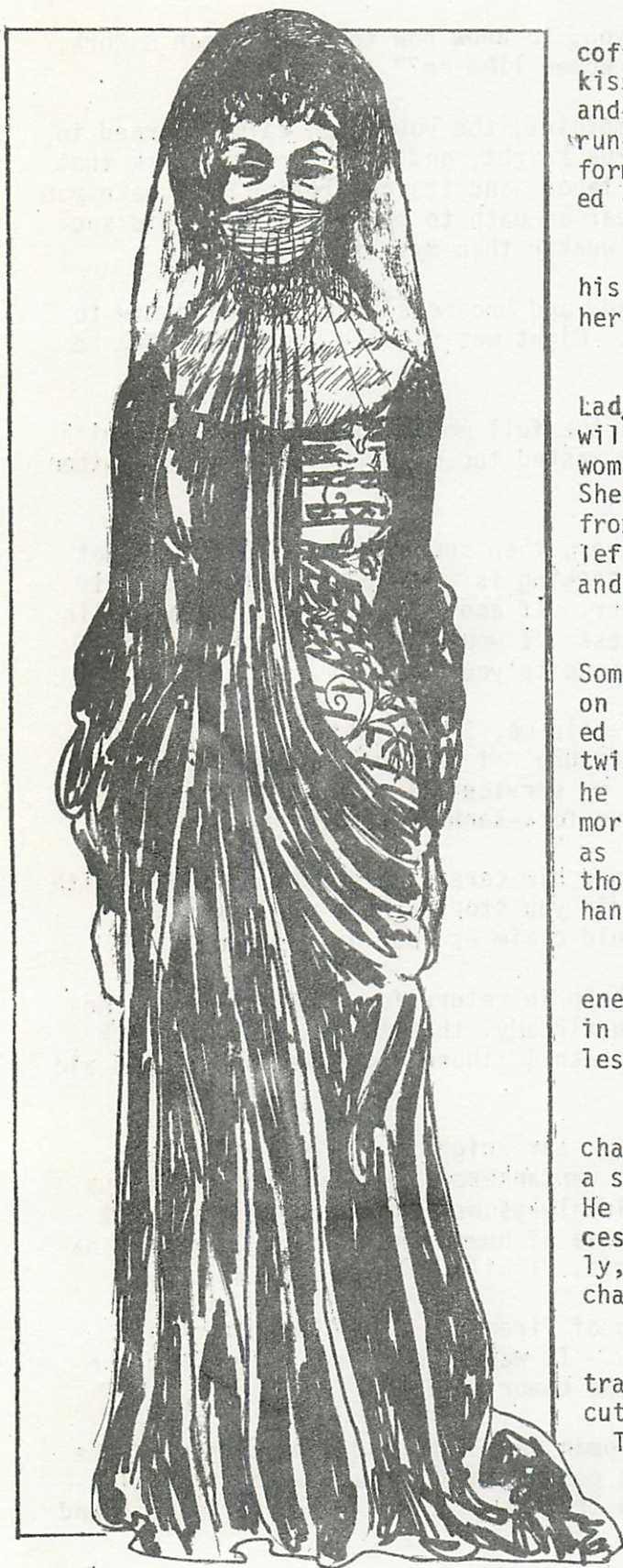
Her sharp old eyes examined him carefully as she continued with this line of questioning. "Why did you stop to help me, young sir? Knowing there was nothing you could claim as your just reward?"

"I did not offer you my help in return for -- for *payment*, Mother. I am a knight. I told you already, that I have sworn an oath to help all those who are weaker than I, those who have no other to aid them in their time of trouble."

"Your heart is indeed kind, Sir Knight," the old woman said. "You have risked your quest for a cantankerous, ungrateful, querelous old woman. Your kind heart should always be of service to you. But there may come a time when your love of humankind and your generous nature will not be enough. Take this, it will help you then."

She held out a small twig of firewood. The knight took it. He looked at the twig wonderingly. It was an ordinary twig. Had the old woman lost her mind? Should he humor her?

He looked up at the old woman once more and almost dropped the twig in shock. The old woman was gone. In her place stood a regal woman with nut-brown skin and doe brown eyes. She was clad in gold and



coffee velvet, swathed in night-kissed veils, and hung in moon-and-moon shimmered jewelry. The run-down hut had also been transformed and was now a small enchanted castle.

"What? Who?" Shock kept his thoughts and questions incoherent.

"You have befriended the Lady of the Forest, my Lord. She will serve you in good stead," the woman said in a low, musical voice. She and the castle then disappeared from view and the young knight was left holding the enchanted twig -- and a magical memory.

He looked around bemusedly. Somehow, his armor had been packed on the back of his horse. He walked over to Sunfire. Putting the twig carefully into his saddle-bag, he struggled into his armor once more. The job was not as difficult as he had feared. It was almost as though a number of small, invisible hands were helping him.

This impression was heightened when he somehow found himself in the saddle again, Sunfire restless and feisty beneath him.

He looked around the enchanted grove one last time. What a strange and marvelous adventure! He would have much to tell his princess when he rescued her! Resolutely, he turned his back on the enchantment and rode on.

Rather than completely retrace his steps, the young knight cut through the forest at an angle. There was no path, and Sunfire picked his way carefully. The young warrior wondered if, en-

chanted or not, he should have spent the night in the clearing belonging to the Lady of the Woods. But no, the faerie folk did not appreciate those who abused their hospitality uninvited. And he had *not* been invited to stay; to have done so may have lost him the Lady's good-will.

Sunfire stumbled on in the night-scented forest. The young knight could no longer judge distance or direction. There was no place suitable for a rest. Although they might very easily be lost, they had no choice but to continue making their slow way through the impeding trees.

Both man and beast were tired, reeling, when a song, bellowed forth in a very *un*musical tenor, reached their ears. The knight pulled on the reins to direct Sunfire in the direction of the singing. They broke through the edge of the forest. A middle-aged man in the tattered clothes of a common sailor was sitting at a crackling fire. He was holding a fresh-caught fish over the fire, and a fragrant brown fluid gurgled cheerfully on the edge of the fire-pit. The man was singing a sea-chanty to himself. Beyond the tar was a rushing, rain-swollen river.

The sailor looked up at the sound of Sunfire's hoofs on the rocks. His singing halted as he spied the horse and rider. He rose to his feet. "Greetings, Lord. Would you ~~share my~~ humble fire and repast?"

"I would. Thank you, Master Seaman." The young knight slowly got down from his steed. He removed the bridle, reins, and saddle and turned Sunfire free to forage and bed down for the evening. Then he turned to the welcoming fire. The sailor held out to him a peeled tree branch on which was spitted another succulent fish. The knight accepted gratefully and sat down.

He and the sailor began to swap stories. The sailor was seeking his fortune and was in pursuit of a mystical silver and gold bird of flame, a bird he called a phoenix. But now his quest was called to a halt.

"And why is that, good Master Seaman?", the young knight questioned. The sailor pointed to the raging river just fifty yards from their comfortable fire. "I am stranded here, good sir. Adrift without a boat and with no way to cross yon rapid water-way. The phoenix-bird is on the other side, and there is no way to get across."

"Can you not follow the shore-line up or down the river a few miles until you come to a section you can ford easily?"

"There is no such section, young lord. The river Nevon is impassable from one end to the other." The sailor smiled wryly. "I should know, Sir Knight. I have traveled from one end of the land to the other, keeping always the river in sight. It is impossible to cross either on foot or on horseback."

"What about a boat? You are a sailor. Surely you could build a small boat to cross the river at a narrow point."

"The water is too swift, young sir. Many have tried to cross the water-way on a wooden steed, only to be swept away to be heard of no more."

The knight frowned. Surely there must be some answer to this puzzle! If not, how was he to rescue his princess? He knew, with that strange confidence and sense of hidden knowledge that had been his since the start of this quest, that his princess waited on the other side of that river.

The sailor leaned forward, stirring the fire, which had died down during their long talk. Now only embers remained. "But there, tomorrow is another day. We can ponder more on this subject then. For now, let us sleep.

So saying, the tar lay down and was soon snoring away. The young knight looked at his companion and shrugged. He removed his armor and outerwear, noting wryly that his skill seemed to improve with practice -- not quite so many fingers were bruised this time. The knight then lay full-length on the ground, using his saddle to rest his head. He listened to the seaman's snores. Their rhythmic pulsing soon lulled him to sleep.

His dreams that night were strange. He was in a place of smooth metal walls, of never-changing seasons, of doll-like people. The Lady of the Woods was there, but most strangely altered. He also recognized his present companion, the sailor, although he, too, was garbed most peculiarly. There were others beyond the Lady and the sailor, others that he somehow recognized, yet could not name.

He woke confused, disoriented, as tired as though he had had no sleep at all.

The sailor was still sleeping, his snores in no wit stilled. The young knight rose to his feet and dressed himself in his armor and outerwear once more. Picking up the pot in which the sailor had cooked part of the meal the night before, he walked down to the river for water. He knelt, scooped up a containerful, and rose to his feet again. He stood there lost in thought several moments, trying to discover a way to cross the raging waters. He could not accept such an ignominious end as this for his hopes and dreams, for his quest.

An idea came to him suddenly. He hurried back to the sleeping area, set the water down, and woke the sailor. Quickly, he explained his idea. The sailor looked from him to the near-by rapids in astonishment. A smile broke out over his gnarled face and he nodded his head. "Aye, lad, it may just work. It may indeed."

The two set to work with a will, cutting down branches and small trees. The young knight thought with amusement that his sword was certainly seeing yeoman service. The sailor used an axe-like instrument he pulled from his over-stuffed duffel bag.

By noon time they had enough wood for their purposes. They stopped for a small meal. Some freshly caught fish, a fragrant batch of piping hot bread from a jar of starter that the sailor carried with him, some wickedly sweet honey combs they found in an old hollow tree that morning, and another batch of the sailor's fragrant hot drink provided readily for their needs.

"Good Master Seaman, that was as good a meal as any I have had."

The sailor smiled contentedly. "Aye, hard work is indeed an excellent appetizer."

In mutual accord, they rose and returned to their chore. By late afternoon they had managed to lash together a bridge quite capable of spanning the river. The knight tested it, walking carefully out to the center. If it had not been engineered properly, it would break under his weight and he'd fall into the rapids below to be swept away.

The bridge held. He turned and waved to the sailor, then returned to the shore. He and his companion gathered their belongings and packed them. The knight then resaddled his steed. The two humans and the horse then crossed the river. They reached the other side in safety, then turned and faced the now distant shore that had so affectively served as a barrier to them but the night before.

"We can leave our spanspan device for those who come after, Master Sailor."

The sailor smiled and shook his head. "No, my Lord. Just as you have demonstrated that you have wisdom, intelligence, patience, and understanding, so too must they who come after pass this test on their own."

With that, he gave a wave of the hand and the bridge disappeared in a puff of smoke. The knight rubbed his eyes. Surely the sailor was taller, more erect. Though still in a naval outfit, his clothing was now spotless, richly appointed. He was now an officer and a leader of men rather than a simple sea-farer.

The seaman smiled at the knight's wonderment. He bent to pick up a smooth rock. "You have shown yourself a friend to the Lord of the Seas, lad. You have proven you have a strong mind in addition to a kind heart. But there may come a time when neither of those qualities will save you or your princess. Think of me at that time, and use this gift." He handed the younger man the rock he had picked up. The Lord of the Seas then disappeared.

Bemusedly, the knight looked at the rock in his hand. He then looked at the river, still whirling madly by and again with no means of crossing. He had a rock in his hand and stood on the far bank of the river. Were it not for these physical evidences, he'd be tempted to believe that his entire relationship with the seafarer had been a dream.

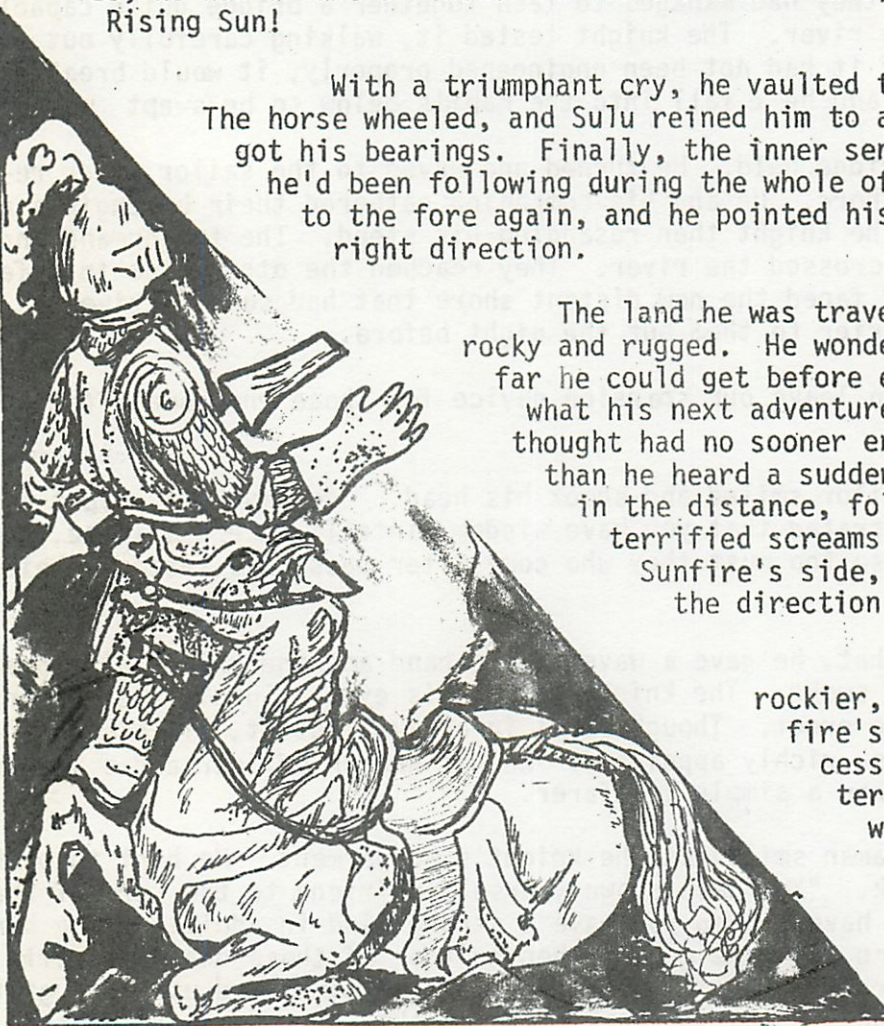
He had accepted the presence of the Lady of the Woods the night before. Those woods *were* enchanted, after all, and her presence not at all out of place. But this! He had worked next to the seaman, had shared supper with him, had slept at his fireside, had broken his fast with him. How then could the sailor be the magical creature he had shown himself to be? Was everything and everybody in this country enchanted? Was everything other than it seemed to be? Was he the only creature who was truly what he was?

And, just who am I, anyway? Sunfire nudged him, whickering softly. He reached up to pat the charger. His hand hovered thoughtfully over the brilliant sun pattern embroidered on the livery. A name! Yes, he had a name at last! He was Sir Itaka Sulu, the Lord of the Rising Sun!

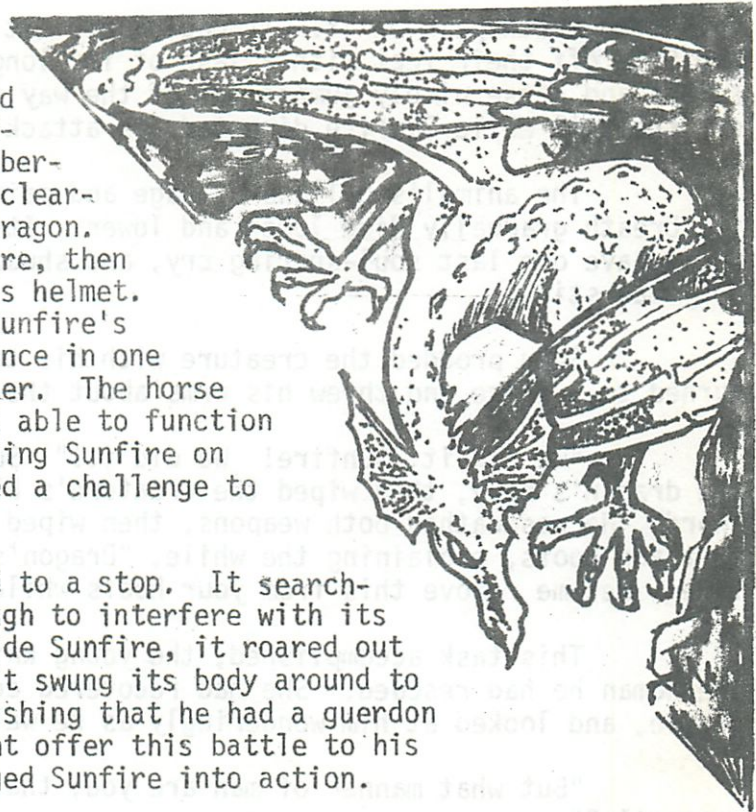
With a triumphant cry, he vaulted to Sunfire's back. The horse wheeled, and Sulu reined him to a halt while he got his bearings. Finally, the inner sense of direction he'd been following during the whole of this quest rose to the fore again, and he pointed his horse in the right direction.

The land he was travelling through was rocky and rugged. He wondered uneasily how far he could get before evening fell -- and what his next adventure would be. The thought had no sooner entered his mind than he heard a sudden furious roaring in the distance, followed by a woman's terrified screams. Setting spurs to Sunfire's side, he galloped off in the direction of the cries.

The land grew rockier, more rugged. Sunfire's gallop was, of necessity, slowed by the terrain over which they were travelling. Nevertheless, within minutes of first hearing the cries of the frightened woman, Sulu came up-



on a scene which called up sheer horror in his heart. A woman was chained to a huge stone in the middle of a small field. Lumbering toward her across the clearing was a fire-breathing dragon. The woman screamed once more, then fainted. Sulu adjusted his helmet. The reins he laid across Sunfire's neck. He picked up his lance in one hand, his sword in the other. The horse was a trained warsteed and able to function on its own in battle. Urging Sunfire on with his knee, Sulu uttered a challenge to the dragon.



The creature slid to a stop. It searched for the being rash enough to interfere with its dinner. Seeing Sulu astride Sunfire, it roared out a challenge of its own. It swung its body around to face the young knight. Wishing that he had a guerdon of his lady's that he might offer this battle to his princess's glory, Sulu urged Sunfire into action.

The first rush was unsuccessful. He was unable to hit the dragon with his lance or sword and the force of the charge carried him past his foe. Without needing direction, Sunfire whirled and carried through a second charge. This time Sulu's lance hit the dragon squarely in the chest. The beast's hide was extraordinarily tough. The lance bent in the middle and Sulu was lifted from Sunfire's back. He landed on his back and was knocked breathless. The dragon, looking around, saw this. The huge body turned and the beast bore down on Sulu.

Sulu scrambled to his feet. He stood there, sword and lance in hand, waiting for the sweeping rush of the dragon. The beast, seeing that Sulu was prepared for him, slowed to a stop. The dragon pawed the air, snorted, and belched forth a mighty gout of fire and smoke. Lowering its head menacingly, the beast then charged at Sulu.

This time, the beast charged open-mouthed, and Sulu was able to drive the lance into the soft spot of the dragon's throat. The beast's mad charge ceased, and it roared in pain. It rolled over on its back, grabbing the staff of the lance with its front paws and trying to pull it free. While the creature was in this vulnerable position, Sulu and Sunfire were able to attack.

Sulu swung at the dragon with his sword and Sunfire reared on his back feet to repeatedly trample the beast beneath razor-sharp hoofs. Roars of pain and anger filled the air. The dragon tried to roll over and climb to its feet to attack the puny, insignificant beings who were

inflicting such pain on it. It could not. It tried to knock Sunfire and Sulu off their feet with a lash of its long, snake-like tail. Knight and horse nimbly jumped out of the way and Sulu was able to hack off the tail while Sunfire directed his attack to the dragon's head.

The animal's bellows of rage and pain lessened, the flames of its breath gradually died lower and lower. It raised its serpentine neck, gave one last soul-searing cry, and shuddered deeply. The huge body was still.

Sulu prodded the creature with his toe. It did not stir. He turned to Sunfire and threw his arms about the horse's neck.

"We did it, Sunfire! We did it!" Sulu pulled the lance from the dragon's body, then wiped the creature's blood from his lance and sword. He resheathed both weapons, then wiped the blood from Sunfire's feet and hoofs, explaining the while, "Dragon's blood is corrosive, Sunfire. Let me remove this from your hoofs while it is still fresh."

This task accomplished, the young knight turned to look for the woman he had rescued. She had recovered consciousness during the battle, and looked at him wonderingly as he walked over to her.

"But what manner of man are you, that you can defeat a dragon so easily?"

Sulu knelt by her side and loosened her restraints. He grinned shyly. "It was not an easy defeat, my Lady, I do assure you. I thought my steed and I would form an appetizer for the beast's main course."

The woman was lovely. A tall, regal blonde, she was dressed in a flowing gown that exactly matched her wide blue eyes. A simple gold chain with a tiny cross hung around her neck and drew attention to a shapely white bosom revealed by a low-cut neckline.

She took Sulu's hand, thanking him warmly for her rescue. He returned the pressure of her touch, wondering if this could be his princess. But no, there was no special sense of belonging, of oneness. There was not that deep-rooted feeling of completion that he was sure he would feel with his princess. Gently, the young knight disengaged his hand. The woman's eyes widened in surprise.

"My Lord, do you find me so unpleasant to look at, so distasteful to the touch, that you must draw away like this? May I not demonstrate my gratitude to you for rescuing me?"

"I need no gratitude, my Lady. I did but my duty as a knight."

"Feel my heartbeat. See how I am in need of your succor, your strength?"

She caught hold of his hand once more and placed it on the smooth, dawn-kissed flesh of her bosom. He could feel the fragile beating of her heart through the warmth of her skin.

He blushed and removed his hand. My Lady, please. I am promised to my own lady. I cannot betray her with you, even though your beauty is surpassing all loveliness."

"Can you indeed resist me, Sir Knight? Are you made of stone?" She threw her arms around Sulu's neck and pressed her lips to his. He tried to protest, to draw away, but she did not loosen her grip on him. Indeed, her kiss became more passionate.

Sulu felt his senses drowning. He almost surrendered to the sweet ecstasy of the female form wrapped so tightly about him. But at the last possible moment the thought of his princess, his ideal woman of grace and beauty, saved him. Resolutely, he pried the woman's hands from his neck and set her to one side.

"No, my Lady. I cannot take advantage of you in this manner. I could not go to my own lady with such a sin on my soul."

The blonde woman smiled gently. "You have shown your courage, Lord Sulu, and now you show a purity of heart that makes you worthy of your princess. You have won the favor of the Lady of Love. But there may come a time when your bravery will not be sufficient to save the day, and your purity of heart will count for naught. If that day comes, remember me -- and use the token I give you now."

She detached the golden chain from her neck and handed it to Sulu. He looked at the delicately forged cross and chain in wonderment, then raised his eyes to the Lady of Love. She was gone, and a whisper of wind gently caressed his cheek with a soft remainder of what might have been.

Still loat in the spell of the lovely blonde faerie woman, Sulu attached the chain around his own neck and carefully tucked the cruciform medallion inside the neck of his tunic.

He remounted Sunfire. They continued their interrupted journey. Sulu urged Sunfire to a gallop. The sun was low in the sky and Sulu was anxious to get to a more protected area before nightfall. *Where there's one dragon there's likely to be more. And even though that last adventure was yet a third test of my worthiness for my princess, that was a real dragon.*

Sulu only allowed Sunfire to slow to a more decorous speed when night finally arrived. The red sun sank and the double moons came up to fill the night with silver and gold light. The forest was strangely quiet, and Sulu kept an uneasy watch for a new danger.

Even so, he was unprepared for the moment when Sunfire suddenly reared back, whinnying in anger. In front of them on the road stood a solitary figure garbed in black. Sulu gentled Sunfire with some difficulty. The horse showed a remarkable reluctance to approach the looming figure.

Sulu dismounted and led the still reluctant horse forward by the reins. The black-clad stranger did not move. He stood squarely in the middle of the road. Sulu and Sunfire would have to pass close by the still, stark figure in order to continue their journey.

The figure could now be seen. It was a strange, elfin being clad in black robes decorated with mystic runes. A magician! Or even a wizard! And, sensing the air of power emanating from the elf-man, Sulu was more inclined to treat the being as a wizard -- and a major one, at that!

In his right hand the wizard held an ebony staff around which twined a small winged serpent whose ruby eyes glinted as though with life. He held an ancient, leather-bound book imprinted with runic symbols in his other hand. The elf-man threw up the hand with the staff in a commanding gesture. Sunfire shied and reared, then came to a restive halt.

"Return from whence you came. This path is not for you. Return."

Sulu struggled to bring Sunfire under control. The steed quieted and the young knight laid his free hand over his sword. "Who are you?" he challenged.

"It does not matter," the wizard replied. "All that matters is that you obey."

The elf-man traced an arcane symbol in the air with the tip of his staff. The symbol glowed in the air, an angry, muddy red color which Sulu found somehow disturbing. He could almost understand the meaning of the symbol. As he reached toward that understanding of the strange star-shape, the path before him began to waver. The surrounding countryside began to fade and he could see the colorless world of his nightmare as though from the inside of a soap bubble.

Sulu cried out in fright and shielded his eyes with a hand.

"No!" he cried out, "not yet! It is not time!" The words came from his own mouth, yet he could not understand them. The elf-man appeared to understand. The nightmare world receded and only the golden, moon-tipped fields of Elysia remained. Sulu lowered his hand and drew a shuddering breath as all returned to normalcy.

The wizard nodded. "Very well. But remember, I shall return. And when I do, you *shall* go back. If you will or no." The black-clad elf-man traced another rune in the air. There was a clap of thunder and a smell of ozone as a lightning bolt burned the ground directly in front of Sulu. Sunfire whinnied and pulled back on the reins. Sulu, temporarily blinded, gave the horse his head. When his vision cleared the wizard was gone.

"It's all right, Sunfire," Sulu again soothed the disturbed horse. The horse quieted and its fretful movements ceased. "We must be nearing the end of our journey. Why else would they send a master magician, an elfin wizard, to fetch us back?"

The horse's response was a comforting neigh. Sulu laughed and nudged Sunfire on with a light pressure of his knee.

With the warning of the elfin wizard ringing in his ears, Sulu did not dare to rest for some time. The horse, a sturdy, loyal companion, made no complaint about their long night-time journey. They rode through a number of small fields, passing only dark and silent farmhouses.

It was almost morning by the time they passed the last farm. They had reached a small hill which Sunfire, despite the night's hard travelling, was easily able to climb. The sun broke out just as they reached the crest of the hill. Another valley lay before them, and nestled in the hollow of the valley was a small, heavily guarded castle.

"That is it, Sunfire!", Sulu exclaimed exultantly. "My princess is there!"

Sunfire whickered questioningly. Sulu shrugged. "I do not know, Sunfire.





I simply know that she is there." He looked around approvingly. "We have a very busy day still ahead of us. Let's get a little rest now, while we can."

The sun was directly overhead by the time Sulu woke. He stretched, then woke Sunfire. He exercised the horse briefly, then took it to water. He took a long leisurely drink himself, then bathed himself carefully. He was going to see his princess to-day! Sunfire and Sulu finished their morning ablutions. Returning to the site of their impromptu camp, they breakfasted sparingly.

Sulu made sure his armor and weaponry were all in good shape. He mounted Sunfire and urged him onward. The horse tossed his head gaily and pranced down the hill toward the castle.

The inhabitants of the castle were strangely quiescent. Guards were posted at the porticullis and on all the towers. Sulu made no attempt to hide, and knew he must be clearly visible from the castle. Nevertheless, no acknowledgement was made of his presence until he had approached within arrow's distance of the guards. Then the brazen notes of a trumpet filled the sky. Sulu held shield and lance at ready and rode slowly onward, expecting an attack at every step.

The attack never came. Sulu rode Sunfire past the guards and through the archway of the porticullis. The horse's hoof-beats echoed in the emptiness. The guards made no attempt to halt him. Rather, they saluted sharply as he rode past their stations.

Sunfire clattered over the wooden planks of the moat-spanning bridge on the other side of the porticullis. They entered a large, open courtyard around which the castle towers and living areas had been built. Flags and bannerts flew from every window and tower. Sulu examined the markings on the flags carefully.

That one. Yes, that must be where my princess is being held a prisoner. He nodded thoughtfully as he read the symbol on the banner -- a pure white love-me-ever bud on a field of royal purple. What could be more appropriate?

Sulu wheeled Sunfire in the direction of the tower from which the princess's flag was hung. He had gone perhaps half-way across the courtyard when a trumpet blared. He turned his head. A knight clad in black armor, riding a black steed, and carrying a shield embossed with a coat-of-arms comprised of a black two-headed eagle on an ebony field, challenged him.

"The princess is mine," the other knight proclaimed in a highly accented voice. "I vill fight you now for the honor of her hand. I have been approved of by her father, the king. I am heir-apparent to the throne."

"That does not impress me. If all were as settled as you claim, why is the princess a prisoner in her tower?"

The black knight did not answer, but merely shifted his lance to a more favorable position. Sulu followed suit. There was another flourish of trumpets and the challenger urged his steed forward in an attack charge. Sunfire set out at a gallop to meet the attack.

The two horses swept past one another in a cloud of dust. Neither rider scored a hit. The two horses went by, turned, and made ready to charge again. They needed very little urging from their riders to do so.

The attack came. This time Sulu made a direct hit on the other's shield. The black knight reeled in the saddle but did not fall. The two riders turned their steeds and charged once more. This time the challenger was able to get in under Sulu's guard and score a direct hit on Sulu's breast plate.

Sulu was almost knocked from the saddle by the force of the blow. Dizzy and confused as he was, however, he realized that he should have been killed by that blow. He could not explain why he was still alive and had no time to look for an explanation.

His head cleared only in time for him to see the other knight bearing down on him yet a fourth time. He raised his shield and lance and set Sunfire to a smart gallop to meet the black horse and rider.

Both lances shattered at impact and the two young knights pulled out their swords. Sulu delivered a blow to the side of the challenger's head, knocking him out.

The field of honor was empty. Sulu had defeated his rival, the challenger for the princess's hand.

Sulu sheathed his sword. He picked up the reins once more. He paused thoughtfully. How *had* he escaped injury at the black knight's hands? Sulu looked down at his breast, at the area on which he had received a direct hit from his erstwhile enemy's hands. His armor had been split asunder. What had saved him?

He slowly pulled the last magical gift he had received out from its resting place on his breast. The golden cross the Lady of Love had given him was bent out of shape.

He remembered the Lady's words. *"There may come a time when your bravery will not be sufficient to save the day, and your purity of heart will count for naught. If that day comes, remember me -- and use the token I give you now."*

Sulu pursed his lips. The Lady's keepsake had worked even

without his volition. It had deflected the lance of his challenger to save his life. He kissed the damaged cross. Aloud he said, "Thank you, Lady." Once again he felt a soft gentle kiss from the wind. Sulu tucked the cross back into his mail shirt and urged Sunfire across the strangely deserted courtyard. He felt uneasy, but did not want to stop when he was so close to his goal.

Sulu dismounted and laid the reins across Sunfire's back. "I'll be right back," he told the golden steed. Sunfire whinnied and tossed his head.

Sulu walked to the tower. There was no visible ground level point of entry. He walked around the structure. It was a bare, stone-hewn tower with only three windows on the very highest level. How could he rescue his princess? There had to be some answer! Some reasonable, logical plan by which he could make his way to her chambers and rescue her.



He had already received the blessing of one of his faerie gifts. Was this the place to use another? And if so, which? Returning to Sunfire, he took the rock and the twig out of the saddle-bag. He fingered them carefully, thoughtfully. Inspiration was sadly lacking. He made plan after plan, only to discard each as poor. Sulu sighed and tossed the rock into the air. It slipped through his fingers and fell to the ground.

As soon as the rock hit the ground the enchantment on the tower disappeared and Sulu could see the doors and windows of the lower stories. Sulu gave an exclamation of satisfaction. He tucked the twig inside his jerkin, then rushed inside, sword drawn defensively. He met no resistance. He found a staircase and quickly made his way up several flights of stairs. At the topmost level he located a beautiful young woman in a long pink gown.

She sat at a tapestry on which she was embroidering several scenes that looked remarkably like his past adventures. If he had needed any additional proof, other than his own sense of completion, that this was indeed his princess, that tapestry would have provided it. What, other than a close magical bond, could account for the extraordinary rapport of their minds, that she could see his adventures from afar?

"My Lady." Sulu stepped into the room. The princess, startled, whirled to face him. Her aquamarine eyes opened wide. She looked from Sulu to the tapestry she had been working on, and a smile of recognition lit her face.

"My Lord," she bowed before him, "I await your command."

Sulu grinned wryly. "I think our first thought should be for freedom."

The princess answered his grin with one of her own. "Your reasoning, my Lord, appears to be impeccable."

Sulu offered her his arm. She sighed as she put down her tapestry. It had served her well during the period when she waited for her young knight to rescue her. The young couple then headed for the stairs. They had gone down half a flight when a loud hustle from the lower floors reached their ears. The princess and Sulu looked at one another. The time for flight had come even sooner than they had thought.

They ran back into the princess's chamber. Sulu went to the window. It overlooked a still deserted section of the courtyard. He leaned out. Was there any way...? It looked hopeless. The heavy vines covering the lower castle walls had been cut back here, and they were too far from the ground to escape by means of tying the bed-clothes together.

The noise of the advancing soldiery had reached the third floor landing. The guards would soon reach them.

"Are there no hidden passages here?" Sulu looked around measuringly, hoping for some small advantage over the advancing force.

"There may well be. This castle is riddled with such things. But I do not know of any here."

"But there *must* be some way out. There must be."

"You worked your magic to break the wizard's spell and gain entrance to this tower, Sir Knight. Could you not do the same to escape this prison?"

Sulu smiled depreciatingly. "That was not *my* magic. That was the magic of someone who befriended me." He paused thoughtfully, then continued as though talking to himself, "... someone who befriended me. Yes. I wonder ... ?"

He reached inside his jerkin for the twig given him by the Lady of the Forest. Offering a silent prayer to the God of All, he tossed the twig out the window. The twig fell to the ground and instantly rooted there. It sprouted leaves and branches and grew at an amazing rate. Within the blink of an eye, the branches were level with the princess's window. Sulu and the princess stepped out onto the sturdy branches of the magical tree. As they climbed downward, the tree began to reverse its fantastic growth. By the time they could hear the soldiers of the castle break into the princess's room, they and the tree were halfway to the ground. They listened happily to the exclamations of shock and surprise from the guards.

"They are not here, Sergeant."

"What? They must be. Search the premises thoroughly." The sounds of banging furniture and breaking glass offered ample proof of the thoroughness with which the soldiers obeyed their leader's order.

Sulu and the princess reached the ground safely, and the tree was once again a twig, before anyone thought to look out the window. The fugitives were spotted immediately and an alarm was sounded by one of the red-tunic clad guards.

Sulu picked up the twig and thrust it inside his jerkin again. He grabbed the princess by the hand and dragged her around to the front of the tower. Sunfire was still waiting there patiently. Sulu stopped to pick up the rock which had been the Lord of the Sea's gift. As he had hoped, enchantment returned to the tower. Once again the lower levels were windowless, and there was no visible entrance. Sulu and the princess grinned at one another with delight.

Sulu's grin turned to laughter. "That spell kept you confined within that tower. Let's hope it bedazzles the senses of the soldiers, too." He mounted Sunfire. Leaning down, he lifted the princess into the air and settled her before him. The steed, obedient to a light pressure from Sulu's knee, wheeled to escape. Sulu urged the warhorse to a gallop.

The courtyard was still deserted, and they crossed it unmolested. They crossed the moat and reached the porticullis arch before guards came spilling out from the main castle area in response to the alarm so sounded by the soldiers still imprisoned in the tower.

Sulu looked over his shoulder. He had a good headstart. He might, indeed, succeed in this escape attempt. He did not want to claim victory yet, however. A small portion of his brain kept wondering at the ease of their escape. The king could *not* have been so woefully unprepared. Had they been *allowed* to escape?

The hollow echoing of Sunfire's hoof-beats was the only sound as they dashed through the arch-way. They were through and into the brilliant golden sunshine of the surrounding countryside. Sulu and the princess laughed, quite pleased with themselves. Sulu felt relieved. Perhaps his fears had been groundless?

There was a flash of lightning from the cloudless sky, followed by a loud crack of thunder. The lightning bolt burned into the ground at Sunfire's feet. The elfin wizard stood in the road ahead of them. The princess gave a gasp of alarm and Sunfire shied and refused to go on.

Drawing up his courage, Sulu challenged the enemy. "What do you want, elf-man? Why do you delay us like this? Surely our puny lives do not concern the elfen folk?"

"I have given my pledge to the king," said the wizard. "His concerns are therefore mine." The wizard gestured magically and Sulu found himself unable to move. Sunfire also was under the spell, because when the wizard reached out to grasp his reins, the horse docilely allowed himself to be led back to the castle. The princess did not stir in Sulu's arms.

The young knight, his enchanted, enchanting princess, and his now tamed steed were led back to the main area of the castle. The wizard gestured again, voiced a counter-spell, and removed the enchantment from Sulu and the princess. The princess sank back into Sulu's arms and whispered tearfully, "Oh, my Lord, what shall we do?"

Sulu looked at the red-jerked guards with drawn swords and cocked arrows who surrounded them. "At present, my Lady, we can do very little. Let us bide our time, pretending meanwhile to be thoroughly beaten," he whispered in her ear.

She nodded imperceptibly and allowed herself to be lifted down from Sunfire's back. Sulu shook off the helping hands of the guards and dismounted by himself. The wizard gave a grim smile and led the way to the main audience chamber.

A large, banner-draped platform stood at one end of the long, echoing chamber. The king and his queen sat on an intricately filigreed throne atop this platform. Standing to the rear of the throne was a middle-aged man dressed in the white robes of a mage.

"That is one of father's most trusted councilors," the princess whispered to Sulu. "He is usually opposed to the elf-man in every way, and we may be able to call him friend. He has much hidden lore and his magics are equal to the wizard's."

"At least there is *someone* here who may be a friend," Sulu whispered back. "But how can we reach him to ask his help?"

Before the princess could answer, she was interrupted by the king. He looked down from his throne at the transgressors, hazel eyes snapping angrily. "Tonia, how dare you disobey my will in this matter? Do you not realize you have placed the entire succession in jeopardy? I have named Lord Paul heir-apparent, and his marriage to you is all that is necessary to make his claim truly binding."

"Let him have the throne without me, Father. I can love no one but this knight."

The king waved her protests away with a peremptory gesture of the hand. "And who *is* this? A nameless reomancer and adventurer?"

The white-robed mage spoke. "Not at all, sire. This is Sir Itaka Sulu, Lord of the Rising Sun. His livery is quite unmistakable, as are the markings on his shield and tunic. He is not as well-known in our lands as Lord Paul, but he is of equivalent house and honors."

The king shook his head. "It is too late, Tonia. Parliament has already approved your marriage to Lord Paul. You cannot expect the members to retract that approval and then immediately grant approval for you to marry Sir Itaka."

The princess wept silently. Sulu was torn by her tears. He stepped in front of her. Raising his chin stubbornly, he said, "The Princess Tonia has granted me the right to protect her, Your Highness. I hold that right to be a sacred trust, and will protect her even against you, if need be."

"Will you also protect her against me?", queried the wizard in deep tones. Sulu felt a sudden chill, a premonition of deep and abiding danger, emanating from the elf-man.

"I shall!", Sulu vowed.

The wizard smiled. A smile fit illy on that elfin face, and Sulu's premonition of dread deepened. Raising both hands in the air, the magician traced a series of runic symbols in the air. They glowed there evilly, in pulsating shades of red, blue, green, and grey. Sulu felt an almost unbearable pain in his head. Behind him, he could hear Princess Tonia gasp aloud in pain.

The wizard chanted a series of strange, arcane spells. The words threaded their way through Sulu's mind, beckoning him. He could almost understand the spells which rolled so easily from the elf-man's tongue. But he did not *want* to understand those spells. If he did he would have to return ...

The throne room shimmered about him, the colors and the grandeur melting together dizzily. Sulu shook his head, trying to clear it of the strange double visions assaulting him. He seemed to be two people, and each was at war with the other.

"When they wake, they should be fully recovered, Spock. The drug induced dreams will fade to memories."

Sulu could not tell the meaning of those strange words spoken in the voice of the king's councilor. He tried once more to clear his head and turned beseechingly to the white-robed figure. "Help us!"

The councilor shook his head sadly. "It is too late. You have already acknowledged the other reality."

The other reality? What ...? The spells of the elf-man descended to a mighty finish. In horror, Sulu felt himself dissolving, turning, reverting. "No!", he screamed, horror-stricken. A now familiar blackness swallowed him.

*

Sulu groaned before opening his eyes. "Dr. McCoy, what have you done to my head? It feels as though a million A/M bombs were exploding in there."

There was a soft feminine giggle somewhere to his right. He opened his eyes quickly. A very lovely, very familiar young woman lay in the next bed. He raised himself on one elbow and looked around at the other beds in the sick-bay. They were occupied by the other members of the bridge crew.

Sulu turned back to Tonia Barrows and smiled happily. "My Lady, you look none the worse for your adventures."



"That is thanks to you, Lord Itaka." The young yeoman returned his smile, but sobered instantly. "Sulu? Where is true reality? I know what you mean by my 'adventures', and I know you'll understand any comment I make about that time. But if -- if our experiences in that other world were just dreams, why did we share them? And why did we choose that particular universe to share? It was all so *real*! How *could* it be a dream? Isn't that one of the tests of reality, Sulu. Shared memories and perceptions?"

Tonia looked at the other patients: Kirk, Uhura, Scott, Chapel, Chekov, Rand, several security guards. She gestured towards them. "They were there, in that other universe. They'll share our memories, Itaka. How many minds must be linked before reality is determined?"

Her gamin grin flashed again. "And we can't ask the doctor or Mr. Spock for an objective appraisal of the situation. They shared part of our adventures, no matter how unwillingly."

By stretching, Sulu could reach Tonia. He held her hand warmly. "I'm no longer convinced of reality, Tonia. Was that universe a dream and this one reality? Or was that universe true reality and this but a dream of exile, a grey shadow of truth? I just don't know anymore. But -- "

A gurgle of laughter from a corner of the room interrupted Sulu. He looked toward the sound but could see nothing unusual. He recognized the laughter. It was the sound he had heard from -- from the elf in the glade right before this whole adventure had begun!

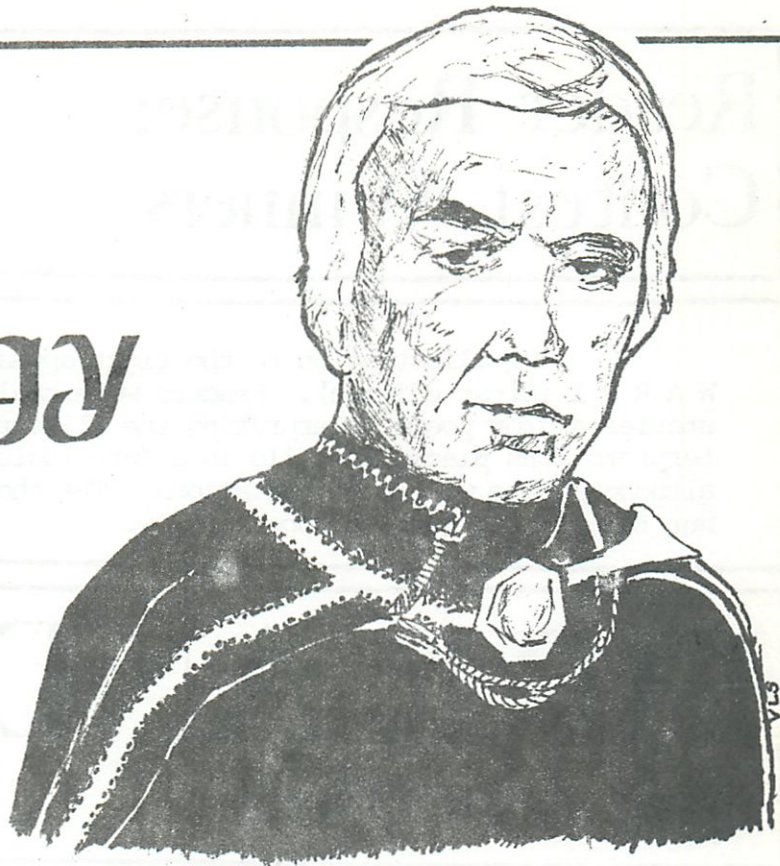
Sulu's eyes met Tonia's. In them, he could see recognition of the laughter. No one else seemed to have heard the sound. Tonia returned the pressure of Sulu's fingers, giving a silent promise.

It is true, Sulu thought, I no longer know where reality lies. And yet, it doesn't really matter. I have proven myself. I have won my battles, have rescued my princess, and have been strong in both victory and defeat. I need never fear again being in any one's shadow.

Sulu's thoughtful gaze went around the room, resting briefly on Kirk, Scott, Chekov, before coming to stop at last on Tonia Barrows. *Yes, I have proven myself. I can face the future, in either world.* He smiled at Tonia, then lay back contentedly, garnering strength to face that future.



elegy



By anne elizabeth zeek

Once there was a world,
a world of green-gilt skies where horus-hawks, hovering high,
rode the rampant wind in dizzinging spirals.
Where sphinxes strode the shifting lapis sand,
flicking arrogant tails at pyramids and towers.
A world where gold-flecked sirens swam burgundy seas,
and the phoenix sought its death, its birth of fire.
Once there was a world, a world called Kobol.

Exiled, we wandered the stars, seeking Kobol.

Once there was a world.
A world of golden seasons, onyx nights, emerald Faith, silver Lords.
A world of rose-quartz sands and crystal towers, of greenery and peace.
A world of Life -- where death rained down from the betraying skies.
Once there was a world, a world called Caprica.

*Exiled once more, we wander still.
We seek that shining legend, Earth.*

And Caprica, I mourn.

Reader Response: Contest Winners

The illustration to the right appeared in *TIME WARP 1* (first edition). Readers were challenged to submit stories and/or poems interpreting the illustration. Most interpretations placed the illo in a "pre-logic" Vulcan setting, although there were some variations. The choice was difficult, but the winning entries appear below.

FIRE AND ICE

by Laurie Huff

The Vulcan elder, Sedar, made his way along the paths of the Garden of Thought followed by a group of children of assorted ages, the oldest barely seven. The day's lesson had dealt with the early institution of Surak's philosophy, and the students had been most attentive. Now, in the manner of reward for Sedar's unspoken approval, they begged for a story.

"Grandfather Sedar," T'Prae piped, "was Surak the only Old One to embrace Nome?"

"No, indeed -- according to legends," the old man replied. "Would you care to hear about --"

His words were cut off by an excited chorus of "Yes, Grandfather!" A stern but kindly look from Sedar was enough to silence the unseemly outburst.

"Very well."

After a significant pause, during which his youthful entourage quieted and found seats among the vegetation, Sedar began to weave the tale.



"Long years ago, before the time of the Great Reforms, there lived the clan N'Kith. They were a fierce, barbarous people who, as all our ancestors, survived by warring with the neighboring clans over hunting grounds and water springs.

"Their leader was Skash, the most skillful and brave of the warriors, who in his youth had pledged with T'Flarin, a Communer-With-the-Ancestors, whose beauty was exceeded only by her strong will. The pair were well-matched and deeply in love (Sedar paused to remind the children again that this was before the Reforms), even going to war together, when most couples took turns.

"In the same year that Surak first introduced his philosophy halfway around the globe, N'Kith fought its most decisive conflict. The victory was theirs, but hard-won, with many lives lost. Skash lay cold on the field of battle, dead from a lirpa meant for T'Flarin. The people, unaccustomed to being without their fiery young leader, fought among themselves for the spoils, threatening to spill more blood upon the already greened sands.

"As brother grappled with brother, T'Flarin, mad with grief, screamed the battle paeon again and again until all eyes watched her. She threw down her long dagger and swore to climb the peaks alone, weaponless, to consult the Ancestors for a vision of what the people must do with their newfound wealth. The members of the clan grumbled, not ready to trust anyone, but since no one else had offered to lead, reluctantly assented. They were sure she wouldn't return, anyway.

"T'Flarin's kin tried to keep her from what they thought was certain suicide, but she would not be dissuaded, and would allow no one to accompany her. All she would take along were some ote cones -- and after the fire from them died, nothing would save her in her lonely vigil from the prowling lematya-beasts.

"So she went, climbing and climbing the hills at the camp's edge until her lungs screamed and her eyes blurred from lack of air. She reached a high crag without incident, and gave thanks to the Ancestors for making her invisible to the creatures of the darkness. T'Flarin then kindled the flames, which are said to have burned not nearly so bright as those in her heart, and spread her arms to the star-strewn sky. Her voice rose in the old tunes, singing first of love, and then shrilling wildly with songs of war, death, and most of all, of pain which is not physical. And during this, T'Flarin gazed at the blazing fire and thought how like her own people it was -- burning and burning until soon there would be nothing left.

"As she thought and watched and sang, the sky grew very

cold -- colder than she had ever known -- and the stars seemed to grow nearer and brighter. Finally, the wind began to blow, and T'Flarin stared, mute now with startlement, as freezing white flecks swept down from the sky to fall upon her upturned face and pattern her long raven mane. To her, it seemed that some of the stars had fallen and turned to these cold crystals..

"Snow?", ventured one timid voice.

Sedar nodded. The children were already familiar with Terran phenomena from other studies.

"To continue. The snow also covered the fire, and soon it had gone out, the unburned section only smoking slightly. T'Flarin thought again of the people and shivered with understanding. She fled down the slope, hurrying not out of fear, but because the ancestors had spoken to her.

"The woman who returned to the camp of N'Kith was changed. Her face, which had been ravaged with sorrow when she left, was calm and expressionless, and her voice was cold. The people were silent and afraid. They, too, had seen the crystals of ice, and had not known what they were or what they meant, so they listened now.

"'No more war,' T'Flarin said, 'No more burning, no more passions. It shall be cleansed from our blood forever or we shall all die. The falling stars from the Place Above have smothered the sacred ote -- so shall they damp the fire in our hearts!'

"The people listened and, with T'Flarin as example, obeyed. In the future they would prosper. But that night, T'Flarin knew nothing of the future. She knew only her own very difficult and lonely present.

No one followed her to the burial pyre, nor later, near morning, to the Shrine. Thus, no one saw the tears which streaked her new mask and spoke of bitter embers."

*

Sedar sighed softly and surveyed the seven intent faces of his charges. Momentarily, he contemplated wisdom versus heresy. *Ah well, it is only a legend*, he convinced himself, but he did not fail to notice that Ambassador Sarek's son looked particularly thoughtful. His last thought before dismissal was, *This one, too, may be the stuff of legends...*

A SONG FOR THE GODS

Shala, goddess of the night and mother of all its heavenly lights,
Take pity on me, thy priestess,
And hear my prayer of supplication.
Remember my many offerings within thy Temple precincts.

Worthy am I of thy bounty. Though
Others have forgotten thee, I have faithfully performed thy rites.
Receive this offering from my fire, and if it pleases thee,
Shield he who is my bondsman within thy power.
Hinder not his courage in battle.
In safety suffer him to lead the assault and victory. I
Pray thee, if naught else, return him to me -- unharmed.

*

Variant

All is consumed in searing flame as the

Blood fever rages uncontrollably within.
Lust. I am overcome by the unfamiliar,
Overpowering need and I will surrender myself to
Overwhelming desire. It is true. This time makes
Makes single-minded savages of us all.
Insanity rules, as all logic is ripped purposefully away.
Naught else matters, and
Gratefully I hear the sound of silver bells.

by FRANCES ZAWACKY

AND WHO SHALL JUDGE THE LORD?

by Virginia Lee Smith

SONG FOR A KRAITH DANCER

Turned and changed, the race that raised these broken Towers, forgot-
ten certain lore,
Long gone the weapons dread that turned to windswept desert sand what
once was crystal shore,
And slower beats the time-worn Vulcan heart beneath a burning sky
As still the air repeats relentlessly that all who live must die.

Lest we forget! Lest we forget!

Quitted and lost, the long-drawn strife, and dust who valued honor
more than life,
The People choose calm Logic now, not barren Glory bold, to wed, to
bed, to wife.
In Light and Dark, in Life and Death, are patterns made, and set,
and balanced all by One.
No Shadow ever falls where shines no living Sun.

Shall we put out our eyes lest we see?

Two-faced the coin of Life and Death to balance on the edge of War.
Unknown if ~~those broke~~ that balance filled the patterns of the Lord
to less or more.
Defiance of Death may be the active spark to flame Life's motivating
fuel.
Give reverence, then, to Death, Who in destruction brings forth
change, and growth, and our renewal.

*

*And who shall judge the Lord?
Who shall judge the Lord Who made it thus?*

THE STARS LIKE SNOW

by Carol Hansen

Vulcan is fire,,
Vulcan is flame
under cool eyes
in serene brain.

Logic and peace
Vulcan thoughts rule,
nothing savage,
nothing cruel.

Passion is there.
Reason conceals,
hides and controls;
pon farr reveals.

Plak tow insists,
none can escape.
The mind will burn,
the body rape.

One to the other
our Bond was given.
His need now strong,
by old ways driven.

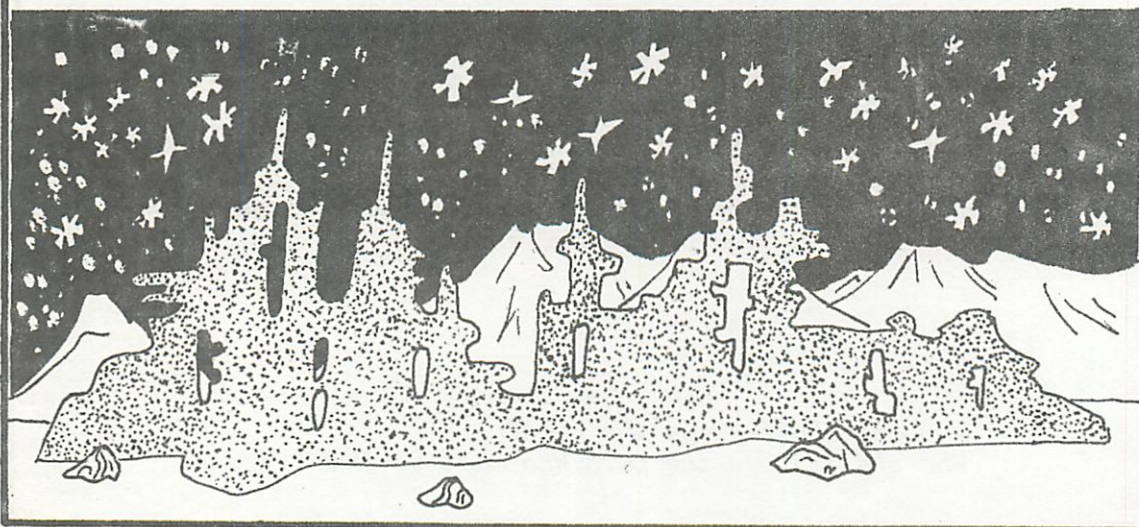
"You now are mine,"
I hear him say.
Held in strong arms,
taken away.

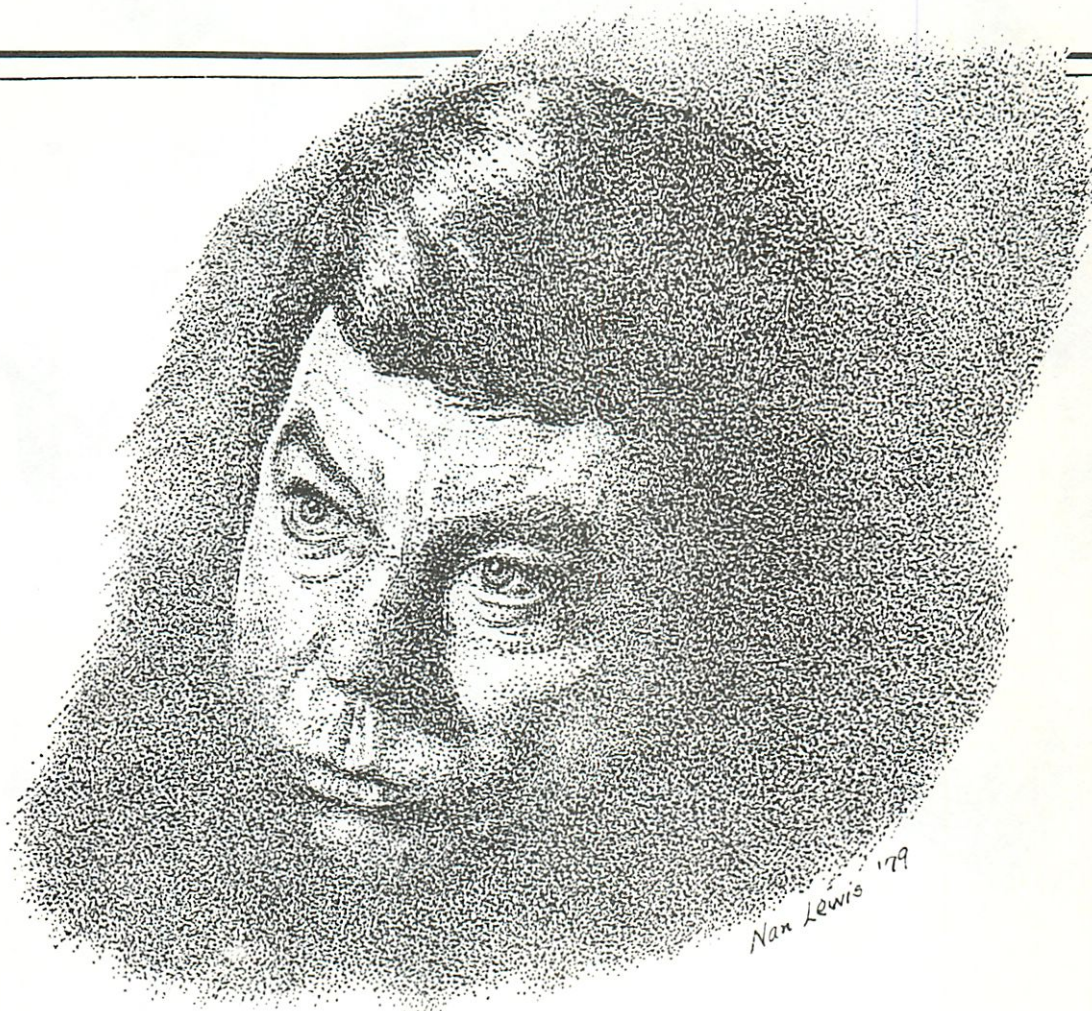
Close to the stars,
Jagged peaks loom.
Fire flares up,
then does consume.

We are complete,
our life begun.
Where there were two,
now there is one.

He lies asleep
while I rise
and raise my arms
high to the skies...

Night of fire,
night of flame,
night of mating,
when snow came.





A M E D I T A T I O N : B O N E S

powerful magic conjure

bones

(property of the resident medicine man!)

deathly white skeletal

bones

(momento of some past physician's failure?)

catgut-suture- primitive saw

bones

(no longer, but sometimes, God, no more) Mm

exposed to the heart bare

bones

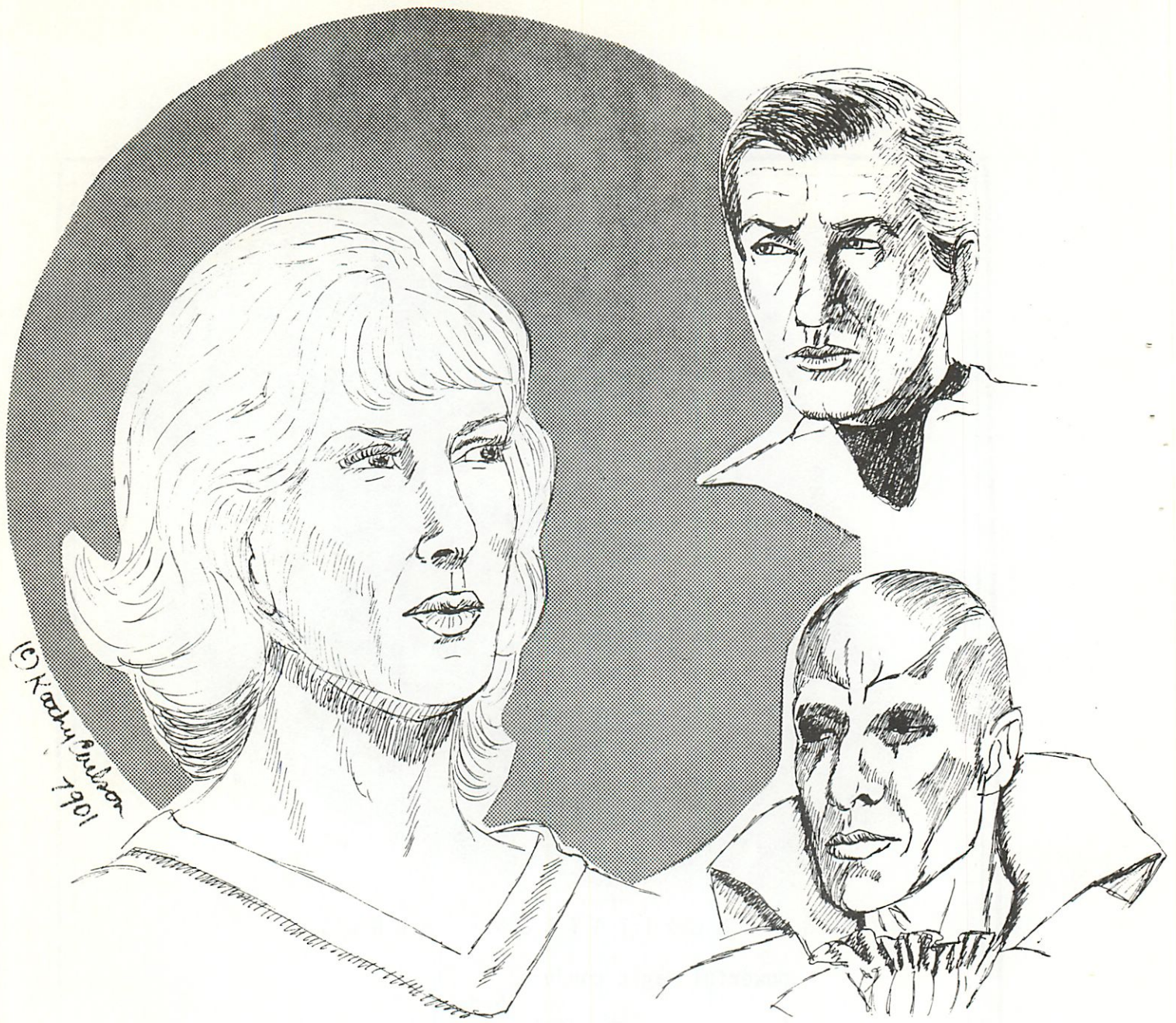
(tell me the trouble -- let me help)

deceptively soft-structured

bones

hold the body together

bev clark
july 1977



© Kathy Gibson
7901

I searched through uncounted months,
across unnumbered light years,
for some sign, some proof,
good or ill,
of your fate.

Dear God! Would I have been
so diligent, so hopeful,
if I had the slightest inkling
of the Roger
with whom I would be reunited?

Man to android --
a transformation obscene to me
in its very concept.
I cannot control the ripples of revulsion
which still wash over me.

Perhaps, in those last moments
when your overt facade of humanity
was crumbling, collapsing,
you did finally realize
just what you had become.

For it was by your hand
that the phaser was fired,
destroying both you and your creation,
ending forever your twisted quest
for a state man will never,
for his own sake must never, attain
by his own hand --
Immortality.

by Sarah Liebold

REFLECTIONS

by FRANCES ZAWACKY



On Keeping the Faith

Amanda put down the embroidery hoop in disgust. *I'll have to give it up entirely.* She simply couldn't stand to look at the needlework any more. It brought back memories -- too many painful memories -- of the Seder cloth she'd been working on when... She hadn't ever finished it. There hadn't seemed to be any point in taking it to Vulcan with her then. And now, well, knowing how her parents had reacted when she'd told them of her marriage, she rather expected they had burned it.

At home -- no, on Terra -- tonight is the first night of Passover. I'd planned to finish that tablecloth for tonight. How long ago and far away that personal promise seems. The Seder is (was? -- no, is -- after all, as far as my family is concerned I died three months ago) a family meal for the Graysons. Everyone comes. My family... You know, I think they would have forgiven Sarek the fact that he was Vulcan -- if he had been Jewish. They apparently forgave the ancestor who "Christianized" the family name. Of course, he had "political" reasons -- good ones. Well, dammit, so did I. Oh, face it, Mandy. They didn't even try to understand. Love is no respecter of religious barriers...

Why am I so "religious" all of a sudden? Wasn't I the one who always lectured Mom and Dad that the dietary laws were nothing more than sensible health measures?

Amanda sighed as she packed away the embroidery and the memories. You're homesick, Mandy, that's all. It hasn't been any easier on Sarek. It's been three months and many of his friends are still wary of our marriage. And with the child due in the spring...



On the Meaning of Love

Sarek entered the kitchen and paused in the doorway to study his wife. Amanda was absorbed in preparing the *yertre* for baking and was totally unaware of his presence. She wiped her arm across her forehead--- a useless gesture of defense against the heat. The waning light cast long shadows across her face and brought into sharp relief the wisps and tendrils that had escaped the net in which she had caught up her hair.

Her long hair is impractical in this heat. They had argued about it, so he knew she kept it long only because he loved to run his fingers through it when they were in bed at night.

She looks tired, he thought; concerned. My entire world is physically draining for her. She has had much to adjust to here; and yet, I have never heard her complain. And her family has not helped matters. She never mentions them now -- and yet I know she has not put them out of her mind.

Do humans have the same reverence for family that we do? No, reverence is not the correct word. Yet there is something -- unspoken between us -- a tradition she too has broken. A bond? If so, one of many. One of the reasons she married me? I once foolishly asked her why she had married me. She has given so much and gotten so little -- no, she would never think to put the matter on a balance scale.

"Amanda," he said quietly.

She looked up, smiled, and met his two extended fingers with her own.

"Welcome home, my husband."

"Amanda, it would no doubt be cooler and more convenient for you if you cut your hair."

She looked at him, her smile thanking him for his approval and recognizing his sacrifice.

It is a small sacrifice to make for love.

The thought was at once selfish and consoling.



And in another reality...

On Keeping the Faith

Sarek:

I am going home. I have to. I know I should have faced you with this and discussed it -- that would have been the Vulcan way -- but I couldn't. How could I hope to explain to you that I love you, but that I cannot live with you -- at least not now. It's all so illogical -- and so true.

Sarek, it has been three weeks since you returned home with news of our son's death. I remember how calm you were that day. I remember thinking that Spock was gone, and that I had not even been allowed to say "good-bye" to him in my own way. There was only Vulcan's way.

You've been calm throughout. I remember my tears -- no, hysterics is probably a more accurate word -- and thinking to myself that this was no way for the wife of a Vulcan ambassador to behave. But why should I have felt guilty about my tears? All I can remember is you, calm -- god, I could have stood anything but that calm. I remember hating Vulcan, its traditions... I remember asking myself if you mourned your son's passing at all.

And that was when I realized that I did not understand Vulcan -- or you -- at all. I even began to wonder if you understood me. And that was when I realized I had to return home.

Call it a loss of faith if you like. You see, I wanted to rant and rage against the fates that took our son from us. I wanted you to rant and rage with me. Failing that, I wanted your comfort, your support, your arms around me.

I've received neither because -- it's not the Vulcan way.

He was your son too! And he was so very young... Doesn't that mean anything? Right now I can't accept your acceptance of his death. We've never been so far apart, and I feel cold and empty and alone.

So, I've taken the 17:00 transport through to Lunaport. From there I'll arrange passage home. Maybe there I can come to terms with Vulcan and its traditions, as I thought I had before. And, when I've gotten the matter of our son's death into perspective, and if you will have me, perhaps I can return. I can't ask you to forgive me. Know, however, that I do love you. Nothing could change that.

Amanda





And in yet another reality...

On the Meaning of Love

Me? The thought was filled with anguish.

Amanda stared at her reflection in the vanity mirror. The hand and arm which moved the brush through her long blonde hair did so automatically, out of habit. They had to; her mind was a million miles away.

I've known him for three years -- and I've never really known him... I shared porn far with him and I never suspected... Oh my god, perhaps I should have! If I were a telepath, would I have? If I were a telepath, would it even have gone this far? Why? He knows I shared his time willingly. There were to be no strings. He wants me to become his bondsmate -- and he knows I've been here long enough to know that marriage is a very poor translation for the Vulcan word. Why?

Why me? All right. I admit that I am physically attracted to the man, and he knows it. What woman in her right mind wouldn't be? But ... I've tested virtually psi-null. I can't respond to him as a Vulcan would. We've ~~proved~~ I can't sense his thoughts, his needs... And he expected me to do just that... as he expected to sense mine. Thank god I could give him that much, and he was in control enough to take only what was offered.

But on the daily basis the bond between husband and wife establishes... I've been my own woman too long. Could I allow another individual complete access to my soul? Could I stand the knowledge that I'd never have access to his?

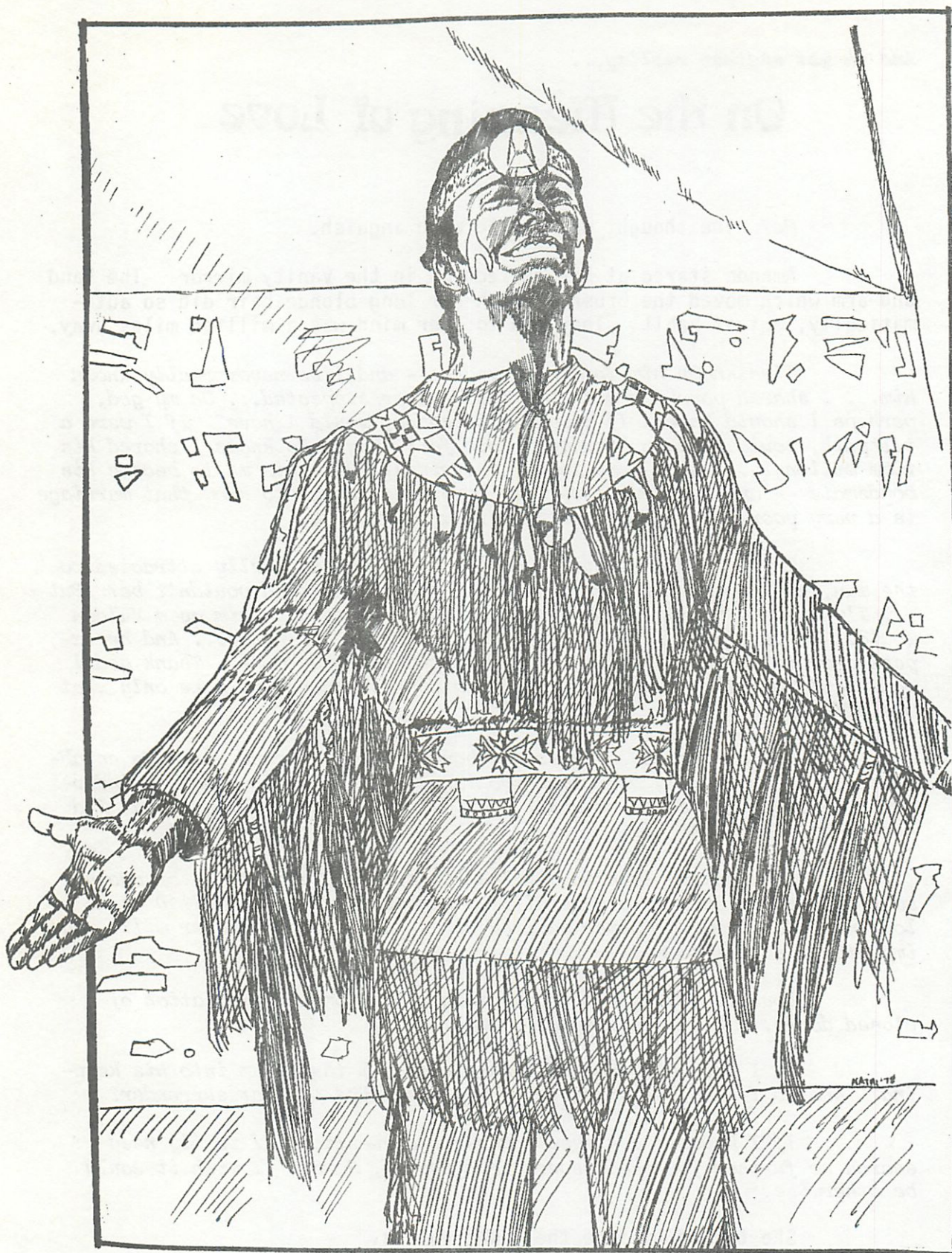
God, making love to a Vulcan is either exquisite -- or agony. Does he love me enough to make all the necessary adjustments? Does he love me? You know, he never said he did -- and probably never will. How important is that to me.

Love... loving a telepath means forsaking the isolation of closed doors. They'd be useless anyway...

Do I love him enough to surrender all that I am into his keeping? And do I have the strength to pay the price of that surrender?

If I have to ask myself those two questions, I really need search no further for the answers. Forgive me, Sarek. I wish it could be otherwise.

She turned to face the young Vulcan.



"HE BLEEDS!"

A God, so they say.
Worship and honor be his,
this new Medicine Chief,
Kirok.

All, he has taken all from me.
My badge of honor,
my lodge, even Miramanee,
beloved woman.

Frustration, anger, black hatred
surge in corrosive waves
through my mind and body,
giving me no peace, no rest.

None will listen, pay any heed
to my words of desperate warning.
When disaster strikes, it
may be too late for my people.

I know in heart's deepest core,
beyond jealousy, wounded pride,
he is a false god, an untrue prophet.
I have proof, final and decisive,
this bright messiah
is dross, not gold.

No immortal he,
this stranger from our temple.
My eyes have seen for themselves,
he bleeds, as any normal man.

Kirok bleeds!

by Sarah Leibold



THE OUTSIDER

By Alice Thompson

Christine sat cross-legged before the open flap of her hide tent, watching the line of mounted men and baggage wagons as it skirted the Romany encampment and wound slowly up a hill upon which knee-high vegetation was newly blackened by autumn's first frost. She knew that nightfall's freshening wind would bring the chill of approaching winter and the stench of violent death to her nostrils, for the warriors of Castle Carmarthen kept watch on the plain beyond this sheltering slope her people had chosen to occupy, and the knights of Methyr Keep were almost upon them. She hoped that the omniscient Diety of All would spare these men who were even now disappearing over the top of the rise, and be merciful to their leader, whom she had recognized.

Of the three peoples who inhabited this land of rains and mists -- the Romany, who wandered, the Celt, who built the towns, and the Vulcanis, who ruled -- the Vulcanis alone were an enigma. Militant by nature, they were known to do frequent battle with others of their kind, but oft-times remained hidden behind the steep walls and forbidding battlements of their grey fortresses. Little was known of Vulcanis customs, and what scant information did exist was based on mere hearsay. All were aware that their women were rarely seen; their children, never. But when defeat came... when one lathered horse brought a single grim-faced messenger pounding toward the gates of a stark and solitary enclosure... Celt and Romany alike could be certain that all trace of its inhabitants would be gone before the sun rose again, though none could say to where the conquered Vulcanis had fled.

Christine had once expressed her fancy that these enigmatic individuals, set apart from Romany and Celt by even their pointed ears and upswept brows, had come from and returned to another place -- a place as distant as the stars that shone through high clouds on a summer's night -- but Gregor, who had raised her and taught her, had laughed gently at her theory, and said that she, whom he'd discovered standing unprotected in a freshly furrowed Celt field eight springs earlier, might as sensibly cherish the same notion about herself.

Still, she could not completely dismiss her admittedly foolish whimsy, and took to studying the few lean, leather-clad Vulcanis males who passed through the villages where her people bartered their handicrafts for Celt produce, and where Gregor displayed the dried

herbs and medicinal teas that he, as a man of wisdom, used to treat the illnesses and injuries of his fellow Romany. It was in the marketplace at Methyr, almost in the shadow of the keep, that she'd first seen the one who'd led his men past her tent on this afternoon, and had heard his half-grown page call him Spock.

Spock. A strong, and therefore a fitting name for the liege of an obviously fruitful domain. Christine was drawn by the magnetism this particular Vulcanis projected, and, believing that he would not notice a child of thirteen, as she and Gregor reckoned her age (and a Romany at that!), she followed him at a distance for as long as he remained among the hawkers' stalls.

Her pride in her own difference from the others dated from that day, though she had never understood why this should be. Unusual because she was golden-haired, and taller than most of her fellow travellers by the time she reached maturity, she allowed her natural fastidiousness full rein, and set herself a standard of immaculacy and discrimination of manners hard to maintain under the conditions of nomadic life.

This deepened the estrangement that had always existed between herself and the group of which she was a part, yet not a part, but she was untroubled by the rift. She had Gregor, whom she loved, and her studies to occupy her life. She'd needed, in addition, only the two long, faded dresses she washed and wore in turn, the shelter of her tent, the edible roots she and Gregor supplemented with Celt vegetables... and her imagination to sustain her.

Yes, she needed her dreams, for Gregor was dead now, and only her uneasy position as seer and herbalist -- a position never, in the collective memory of the Romany, previously held by a woman -- kept her entitled to the company and the protection of the rest. The elders had grumbled when Gregor had refused to apprentice a male, saying he needed none but Christine, but they had been forced to accept her position once her master was gone, for no one else among them could diagnose ailments, prescribe remedies, or cast natal charts.

But Christine knew that the grudging respect she was accorded stemmed from the men's fear of her powers. The women, little more than chattel in this society that relied on sheer brute strength to accomplish any end, followed their lead. She cared for none of them, male or female, and wished only that the sinews of her body might be equal in power to the force of her intellect, for then she would live alone.

But Celt women fared no better than Rom. Christine would find no peace in whatever solitude she sought, for she was female, and therefore vulnerable to slight, and even to assault, from any male -- townsman or traveller -- who might choose to molest her. Here Vulcanis women valued so little? It was likely that only the warriors would

ever know... Christine started, aware all at once that hours had passed since she had last noticed her surroundings.

The pearly sky overhead had deepened to slate, and the Romans, already gathered around their tent-ringed communal fire, were enjoying their twilight hour of tribal society. One knot of men burst into hearty laughter at some shared joke, while several women clustered in more sedate converse about the heavy cauldron that hung suspended over the flames. Christine moved to light her own small blaze -- the same evening beacon she and Gregor had customarily retired to kindle for years before his death. She had maintained that tradition of withdrawal herself, and had perhaps relieved the others by her devotion to habit. In any case, no one of them had attempted to persuade her to join the rest once she was left alone.

She was not hungry. Christine set water on to boil for tea, her appetite effectively stilled by the faintly rancid scent of stewing meat that issued from the huge cooking pot... and by the sickly smell of flowing blood borne to her on the nocturnal breeze. But how could that be? Surely encroaching darkness would have forced an end to the conflict -- for this night, at least. Surely the battle was in abeyance! The sound of horses' hooves distracted her from further conjecturing, and she looked with disbelief at the pair of sturdy war animals approaching the central pyre. Vulcanis knights -- here?

Cesar, the headman, stepped forward, his body thrown into relief by the dancing firelight, and stood awaiting some explanation for this unwarranted intrusion with impassive Roman dignity. The lead rider brought his mount to a halt just short of the leaping flames, and bent toward Cesar, his leather breastplate and close fitting helmet with its long nose-piece clearly visible.

Yes, a Vulcanis warrior! Such a man rarely addressed a wanderer, and for one to seek out a Roman enclave in the midst of a struggle was unheard of! Yet he was there... and not alone. Christine glanced at the second figure, but he and his mount were no more than a shadowy outline to her eyes.

Then Cesar jerked a thumb in her direction -- a short, disinterested gesture -- and the two turned their horses' heads and picked their way through the muttering Romans to stop, at length, before her tent. The first man spoke again.

"You are a healer?"

Christine, peering into his face, thought she recognized the page, full-statured now, whom she'd once seen. She looked at the second rider once more, her heart racing strangely. He was still in shadow, and his helmet concealed much, yet... she believed it was *he*, sitting straight and silent on his tall, powerful steed. She received a

fleeting impression that he remained so adamantly erect through the force of an implacable will before she turned to address his companion.

"I am."

The man swung from saddle to ground in one lithe motion, and indicated his comrade, who remained unmoving.

"My Lord has need of your art... and your silence."

Christine, though mystified by this turn of events and puzzled by the need for secrecy, asked no questions. She inclined her head, then passed through the open tent-flap and busied herself with igniting the two smoky oil lamps that were the shelter's only source of illumination. She'd seen that the elder Vulcanis must be helped to dismount: such a one would have his pride, and she must not seem to gape in the face of his infirmity. The shuffle of booted feet told her that the task had been accomplished, but she pointed at her own narrow pallet without turning.

"Lie there, Milord."

Only after the sounds of his settling had ceased did she face the man whose page was carefully removing his liege's helmet with a tenderness that surprised her, for she'd supposed their people to be a hard race.

The now fully exposed visage was pale and composed. Christine might have thought her charge unconscious but for the intelligence in his dark eyes. Her own gaze travelled over his body to stop at the green-stained cloth bound around his left thigh. She glanced at the page.

"A sword felled him?"

"Yes," he replied, "and the blade bit deeply. But my Lord cannot withdraw into the healing trance while..."

The youth -- for Christine knew that he was young -- stopped short, and she saw that agitation had caused him to speak of something not discussed with one such as she. Did the Vulcanis practise a form of mesmeritic healing? She'd heard of similar mystical cures wrought by Celt monastics, but there, too, the process was steeped in sorcery and arcane ritual. Neither rite need concern her now, however. She dropped to her knees and began to loosen the bandage while seeking to reassure the indiscreet page with incurious words.

"Certainly your Lord must see to his strategy, and would find it most inconvenient to surrender his leadership now. I will do all that I can to restore him, so that he may soon return to the field."



She thought she caught a gleam of gratitude in the youth's eyes -- was it for her promise, or for her circumspection? -- before she turned her full attention to removing the last swath of sticky wrappings. The wound *was* deep, and might have been expected to be bleeding still. Indeed, it was odd that the flow had stopped. She remarked on this fact, and heard the page reply:

"He was stunned, and did lose a quantity of blood before he was able to control..."

Christine gave the young man a narrow glance, noted his heightened color, and sighed. Here was yet another matter of which she must remain ignorant! But, that which had passed was not truly her affair, while that which was to come was in her hands. She examined the injured limb, then spoke to the page with authority.

"How are you called?"

"Dundas," he told her.

"Dundas, fetch spirits," she commanded.

Dundas, by now too disquieted to object to a Rom woman's assumption of authority, protested nevertheless.

"We do not drink spirits."

"Nor shall I invite either of you to do so. They are required to cleanse the wound." Christine looked up in wonderment. "Are your own leeches unaware of this means to prevent sappuration?"

The page's chin rose. "Our leeches have little need to familiarize themselves with the physical manifestations of Vulcanis maladies." His voice dropped. "But Enar, my Lord's physician, could not help him to heal while he must continue to guide his forces." Dundas squared his shoulders. "Will the one who directed us here possess what you require?"

"He will, and that new-stilled and potent."

Christine regarded her charge... Spock... as the page left to do her bidding, and her heart twisted within her breast again. What *was* this feeling she had when she looked upon him? Not pity, for nothing that had occurred on that first day could have sparked compassion in her child-woman's soul, and even now... as he was... she did not pity him, though she must resist the impulse to touch him... to brush back the damp hair that fell across his pallid brow... to elicit a word from those still lips, or to effect some change in that impassive countenance... to turn that distant gaze toward herself... No! She was a healer, and must not while away her time in this foolish manner!

Spock had need of her skills, and she must not fail him.

He was no doubt in pain, though he bore it with stoicism, and the cleansing would prove more painful yet. He might be forced to cry out at last -- and would this exhibition of his weakness humiliate him? She had means to prevent this possible ignominy at hand, and would be better employed in preparation of the herbal draught which would render him insensitive to her ministrations.

Quickly, Christine turned to the table that held her lamps, and there mixed a suffusion of poppy and rope-weed. She hurried back to her fire and removed the kettle from its hook, then rapidly stirred and strained her brew before she knelt beside the man once more and, raising his head with one hand, held a cup to his lips with the other. He drank willingly at first, but soon averted his face, causing the liquid to splash on his chest as he sought to avoid swallowing more. But the sedative was already taking effect. Christine released him and he fell back, his eyes no longer alert.

"My Lord!"

Dundas, a half-filled beaker between his palms, looked from the inert figure of his liege to the long-skirted Rom who sat back on her heels, a slight smile of satisfaction lifting the corners of her mouth. He set the beaker beside the pallet, and grasped the woman's shoulder.

"What meddling is this?"

Christine's smile faded. "No meddling. I have but given him something to soften the harshness of reality."

"You have drugged him?"

"I have eased him. He will awaken, unharmed, in due course."

Dundas slackened his grip and stepped back, though his stance remained rigid.

"You cannot be certain of that," he whispered, "we are not as you."

"How so?"

He ignored the question. "You may have brought about his death and Methyr's ruin by your action." A tremor passed across his stony features. "You have taken much upon yourself, Wanderer."

"I have." Christine's voice was cool, though her heart had twisted in another and more painful way. "But it was you who required

my intervention."

"I solicited only your aid!"

"And that I have provided," said Christine. She found the flask Dundas had set aside and, having spread a blanket beneath Spock's leg, poured the contents over the wound. She next dried the gash, then rose to select a small pot from among the containers ranged along the back of her worktable. "This, too, will help." She smeared the tarry contents over and about the injury, noticing that the Vulcan's lord's flesh was hot as she spread the ointment and bound the leg in fresh linens. Finally she pulled a meager, threadbare quilt from the corner where it lay folded and spread it over the recumbent form.

"He should heal cleanly. As for your fears... we must wait and see. I believe that he will be lucid shortly, and though he will require a deal of rest and sleep, he will be fit to command you in the intervals. Do you require more?"

The young warrior shook his head. "Not if it is as you say. But if you lie -- " His eyes flashed. "If you have harmed him further you will not go unscathed!"

"I understand you. But if the others should come near -- ?"

"Tell them we came for a charm -- an amulet -- to be quaffed with the wine. Tell them that he drank incautiously and fell into a stupor. It matters little, as long as you guard him well. What you have caused cannot be undone, and I cannot remain here to assist either of you, for I have already disobeyed him by staying this long. I must depart with our horses now -- the beasts have already been too long a target for prying eyes -- but I shall return at first light. Expect our gratitude -- or our wrath -- at dawn."

Dundas turned on his heel and left after issuing that promise -- that warning -- and Christine, keeping assiduous watch in the dim, chill tent's interior, had no idea how long it was after the hoofbeats faded away that Spock began to come to himself.

She had not feared the page's threat, but she was relieved within herself when the man first stirred. Christine stretched limbs stiffened by her vigil and replenished the guttering oil lamps' fuel before she bent over him, observing the flush that ran along his cheekbones as she unwrapped his dressings with nimble fingers. He seemed, alarmingly, to be yet more feverish than he had been earlier, but the wound showed no sign of swelling or discoloration, and he had muttered and flung one arm out -- a certain sign of returning consciousness -- so therefore he must be recovering.

Christine discarded the soiled bindings and replaced them

with fresh, perturbingly certain that the Vulcanis lord in her care required warmth and comfort to speed his healing, and those things she could not provide. She felt a brief, hot touch on the back of one hand as she tucked the last strip of linen into place, and heard faint words.

"I have seen you before."

Christine drew back, startled as much by the action as by the statement, but she smiled a little as she looked into eyes which were once more discerning and replied, "Yes, some hours gone by. Your page brought you to me just past sunset."

"I refer to... years gone by."

"Years ago, too," she agreed, surprised. "I had not supposed that you had noticed me then, sir."

Spock's lips twisted in what could have been either a quickly suppressed smile or a grimace as his long fingers pleated the thin quilt that lay over him. "It would have been most difficult to avoid doing so. You seemed a most unusual child... grown, it would appear, into an uncommon woman, for I must assume that I owe my returning strength to your art... though there is some impediment to my resumption of normalcy..."

He stopped speaking as he felt a tug at the padded material against his palm, and his hand encountered Christine's a second time. "Are you always so cold?" he asked, though he seemed preoccupied with a different matter.

"In the waning of the year, frequently." Christine pushed a fold of fabric under his sound leg, realizing that, even so, the quilt's protection was woefully inadequate. "Though I am not so icy as you suppose. You are feverish, and sensitive to chills."

She tucked the coverlet between the length of his torso and the pallet, and he shivered beneath her hands. She remembered her winter garment then, and rose to get it.

"I have never before touched a Rom," he mused, seeming neither to have heard her last words nor to have been aware of her tending. He moved restlessly as he said the words, disarranging the quilt.

"Lie still!" Christine spoke sharply, injured by this reminder that he was a ruler, and she subservient to him. She had almost forgotten their difference, for he had not seemed haughty. His statement wounded her long-held pride, and believing that he might have said, "I have never before touched a viper," in those same curious tones, she determined to cause Spock no more Vulcanis discomfort,

though she was bound to see to his welfare. She brought her woven cloak and placed it over the quilt, then straightened both coverings, being careful not to touch him.

"Is something amiss?"

"Rest now, Milord," she said, not heeding his question.

"But you have withdrawn something of yourself, and your face is set. What -- " Spock's shoulders twitched, and his eyes widened in startlement, as he murmured, as though to himself, "Impossible. It is but some natural deviation from the trance state. Some herb-induced effect... ."

His hands plucked at her cloak as he focused on Christine once more. "Perhaps I have offended you by failing to thank you for restoring me. It is not our habit... though one such as you are must be accustomed to expressions of gratitude."

"And now I am a faithful lackey," she muttered, "to be cheered by a gesture despite my base birth."

"I do not understand." He shifted, puzzled. "I meant only that a woman of your stature must be used to appreciation."

Christine shook her head and sighed, fatigued all at once and shamed that, prepared for disdain, she had misjudged his meaning.

"I, as a matter of course, receive little appreciation from even my own kind."

Spock reached out to grasp her wrist. "In that case... they err."

She felt the tremor in his fingers and, strangely disturbed by the contact, tried to disengage herself, saying, "You need not touch me when you find it repugnant -- "

"I am in no wise repelled."

"But you have never touched a Romany..."

"Before. A fact. But if the touch of a Vulcanis hand is unbearable to you... tell me now, for I fear that this imbalance I perceive may be -- "

A sound from outside made them both tense, and Spock's grip tightened, then gave way as Christine leaned toward him with a hushing gesture. She rose and slipped out into the night with a last hard, warning glance at the stiff figure on the pallet. Cesar await-

ed her.

"I thought your visitors long gone."

"One was... befuddled. He stayed on."

The headman laughed. "Befuddled! What -- a ruler?" His amusement turned to suspicion. "How came those two here at all?"

"One sought a phylter... had heard some rumor of my arts... But he partook of your wine too freely." Christine tossed her head, striving to project disdain. "He will be gone by daybreak -- much the wiser for his incontinence."

"I should enjoy the sight -- but we will be gone before him."

"What?"

"There is discontent among the men. The Vulcanis strife approaches us too closely, and to have their warriors seek us out..." Cesar frowned, and remembered that he was talking to a woman. "Strike your tent at once. We move on when all is in readiness."

Christine half-turned toward her shelter. Leave now? Leave *him* exposed to the elements, and who could know what dangers? He had set her on her guard... then disarmed and confused her. She had cared for no man's opinion since Gregor died, yet the very sight of Spock had moved her, and his words had roused emotions she had not thought to experience since she ceased to have concern for another. She could not go.

She faced Cesar. "I will stay here."

"Alone? Are you mad? I forbid it!" Cesar's mouth twisted. "As little as I love you--- you are necessary to us."

"Not I, but what I know."

Christine hesitated for a moment, then re-entered her shelter, returning almost at once with a sheaf of bound parchment. She thrust the pages at the headman. "This is what you need. Gregor's knowledge... and what I have added myself. Choose a youth who can read and you will soon have the male healer you have so long desired."

Cesar stared at the volume. "You *are* mad, else you would guard this with your life." He looked at her face. "And you are female. Without protection -- "

"My mind is sound, and I know my chances... but I think now that I must choose this once and follow blindly no longer."

"You will regret your decision."

"Perhaps."

Cesar accepted the healers' wisdom and stepped back, the pages held close to his breast. "I have never understood you."

"You never would," Christine told him, and stood watching until the hillside was deserted and the last of the Rom ponies plodded out of sight, its harness creaking faintly, as she wondered what she had done.

She came to herself at length and, chaffing numbed arms, bent to enter her tent.

"I thought you gone."

Christine turned toward the source of the strained whisper and knelt beside the Vulcan lord she had remained behind to guard; she noted his knuckles standing out from clenched fists. "You should not have assumed that," she said gently. "My possessions are still here."

"But I heard sounds of departure... and saw you take a book."

"A collection of herbal receipts long committed to memory. I gave it to the headman, who then released me from following the rest."

"Why...?"

"I no longer wished to remain among the Rom," she replied, "and this seemed as good a time as any other to --"

"No!" rasped Spock, his protest loud in the small space they occupied. "Follow them!"

"I have no desire to rejoin them and, in any case, I have no means to transport my belongings now."

"Then gather what you can carry and flee alone." He twisted her cloak with restless hands and tore the coarse cloth as though it were the flimsiest of silk. "I can no longer misdoubt the signs within me, or hope they will fade of their own accord. You endanger yourself further with every second that passes, for my control shall soon be utterly gone, and compulsion will rule me."

Christine touched his arm, disquieted, but he shuddered and closed his eyes, rejecting her concern. Spock's words had held no meaning for her, and she wondered whether he suffered from delusion, as was possible, for the poppy could induce strange dreams.

But she had administered no powerful dose, nor had he drunk much... and that was hours ago. It was well that she watched over him, she thought. He was not a Rom, and she could not be certain of his response to her remedy even now. Unattended, he might yet do himself further harm. She settled herself to continue her vigil.

"Go!" Spock hissed. "Leave me! I could not know what your potion would cause... but I cannot condemn you to pay the price."

"I cannot leave you. You are ill, and made worse, it would seem, by my efforts to aid you. Your page warned me, too... but I am a healer and cannot abandon you without trying to right the wrong if I am able, or at least attempting to see that you do not tax yourself unduly."

"You are a woman!"

"A fact of which I have been made all too well aware of late!" she said sharply, her patience worn thin by this last reference to her sex and her words prompted by a growing uncertainty about what the morrow would bring. "But I can learn. Though I am a female, my mind is not perpetually beclouded."

"I do not," said Spock tightly, "require your mind!"

Silence rang between the pair as Christine rose to stand over the pallet where he lay. She understood at last what drove him, and in what coin she would pay if she did not go. Yet he had urged her departure, and this she did not comprehend, for she knew the ways of men with women, and they were bestial. How could this one want her, yet seek to speed her on her way?

"Listen to me... I do not even know your name."

"Christine."

"Hear me, Christiana," he said, and she did not correct him, "hesitate no longer."

This was a night of choices indeed! Now, drawn to the man as she had been from the first, Christine knew that he could not persuade her to leave. He had spoken of danger, but that did not signify, for she had no wish to avoid anything to do with him... and no reluctance to stay with him.

"Is it your desire, then, that I should wander abroad alone tonight?"

"No! ... But it would not be for just this night. I am not bonded, else no possibility would exist... I spoke unwisely when I said

I would not require your mind." He looked at her, and his eyes burned into her own. "I would require... much... for a lifetime."

"Then... if I were not Romany..." Christine felt tears spring to her eyes and checked them with ruthless determination. But she could not hide her pain completely and turned away so that he would not see what he had done.

"Naturally," she said stiffly, "I would be an embarrassment to you when your need of me ebbed. I could not know the ways of your people, but I can see that ruler and wanderer should form no prolonged attachment." She faced him once more, and drew herself up. "Men are habitually unrestrained in these matters, but you will find that, though balked, you will not perish of -- "

"I will die."

"That is not likely," Christine told him, but without conviction, for he had spoken with certainty.

"You are wrong... and wrong again. You could never cause me discomfort, Christiana. You were singular as a child, and have not belied your promise of... atypical development. Perhaps memory deterred me from doing my duty, for you are unlike the rest... and I have been called somewhat atypical myself."

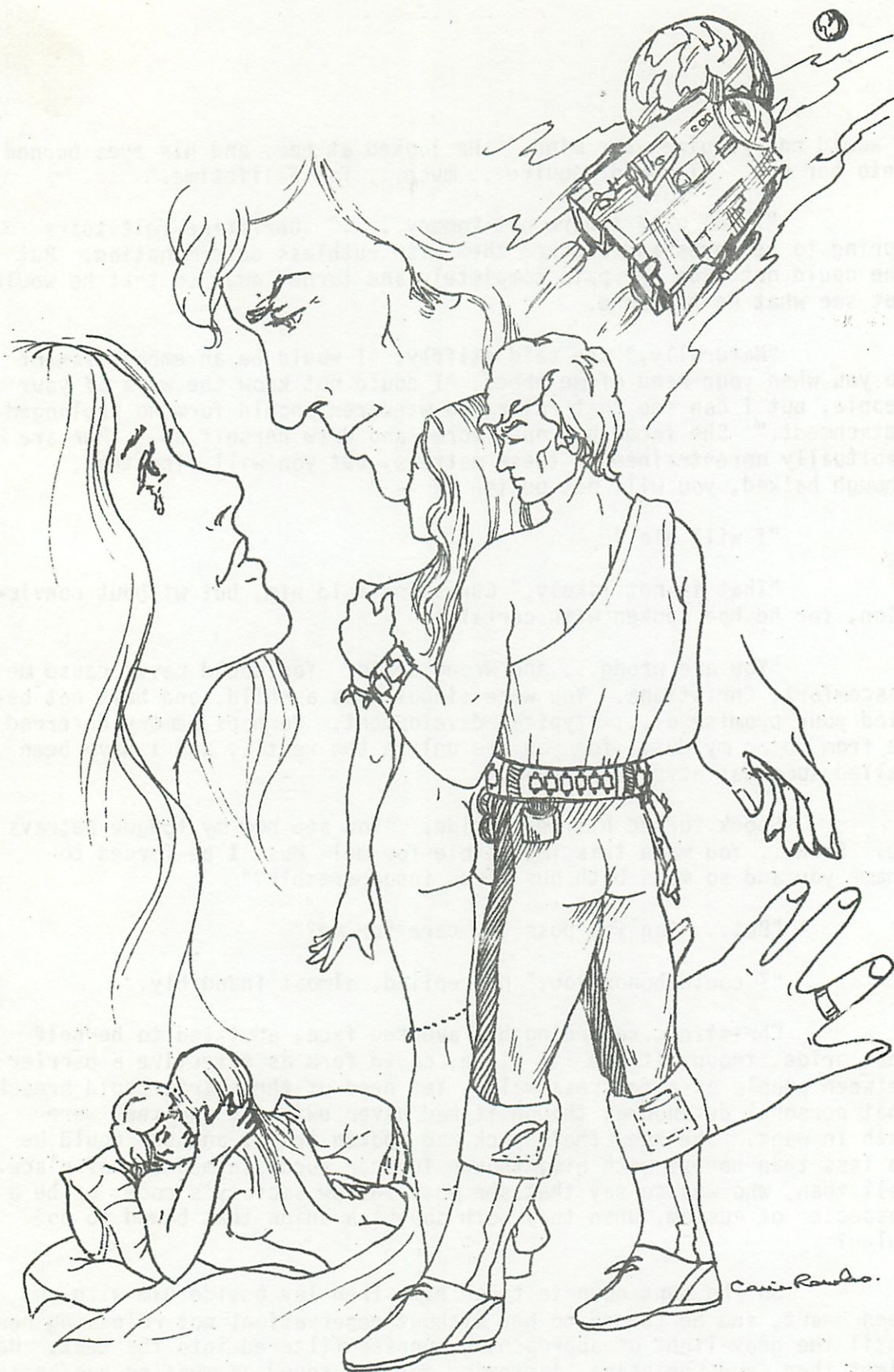
Spock turned his head aside. "You see how my tongue betrays me. Soon... You make this impossible for me! Must I be forced to shame you and so make both our lives insupportable?"

"But... Can you possibly care for me?"

"I could honor you," he replied, almost inaudibly.

Christine, regarding his averted face, admitted to herself that pride, though it had its place, could form as effective a barrier between people as a fortress wall. Yet need of the spirit could breach that personal defense as though it had never existed, and they were both in want. She knew that Spock had spoken truly, and she could be no less than honest with him, though further words seemed out of place. Well then, who was to say that she must follow society's code, or be a respecter of custom, when they both sought a union that bowed to no rules?

So she bent down to touch him, then lay beside him with an open heart, and he turned to her without reservation, not releasing her until the gray light of approaching sunrise filtered into the tent. He slept then, and Christine, listening for the sound of muffled hoofbeats that would signal Dundas' return, knew that she would know but one fear from this time forward, and that was the fear that she might survive him.



Carin Raulo.

Les Femmes des Fantaisie

The fantasy of female as seen through the eyes of the artist:

Kathy Carlson

Hans Dietrich

Mary Ann Emerson

Amy Falkowitz

Amy Harlib

Shona Jackson

Richard Olsen

Carrie Rowles

Carolynn Ruth

Robin Wood







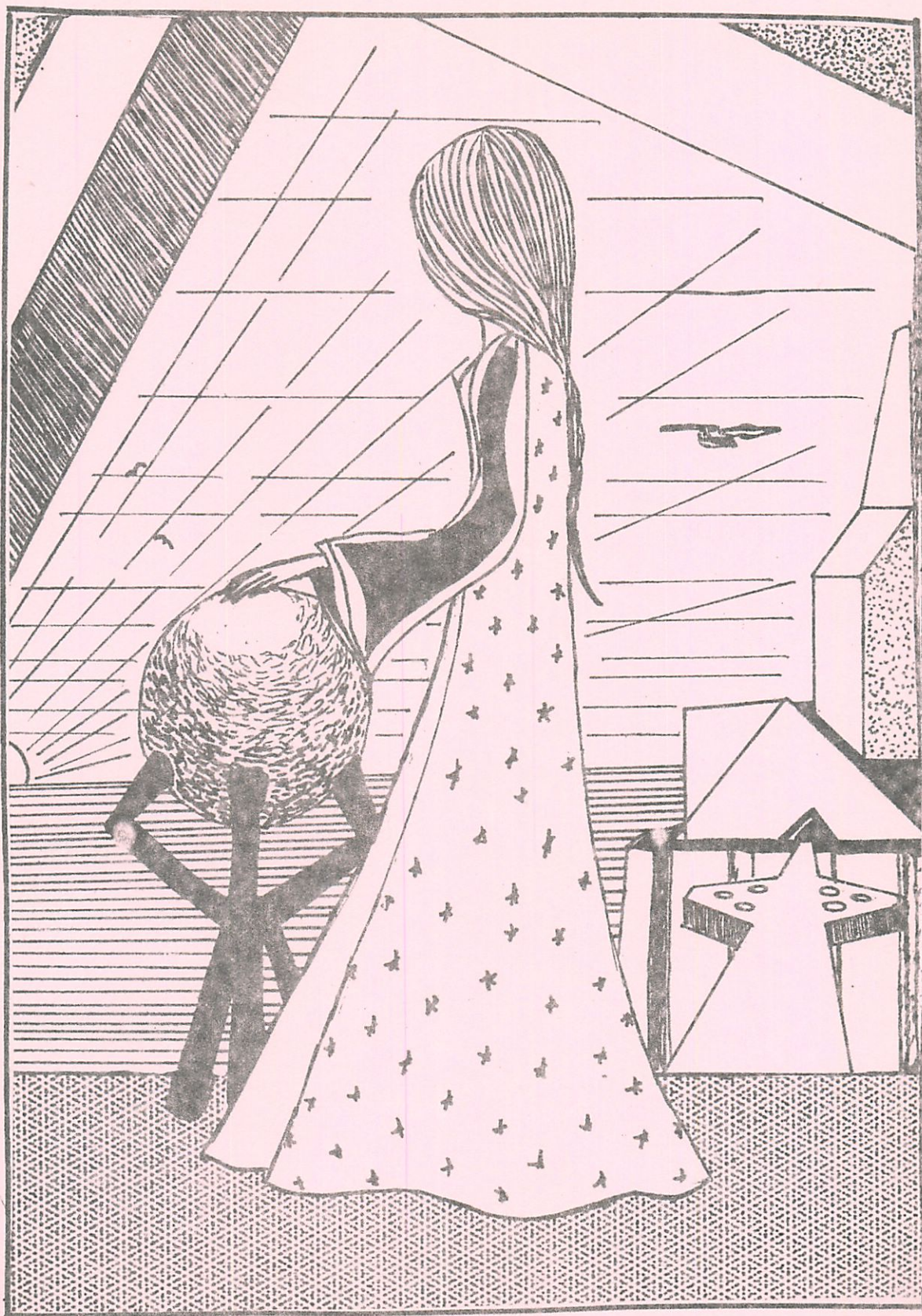






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FIRE SPRITE

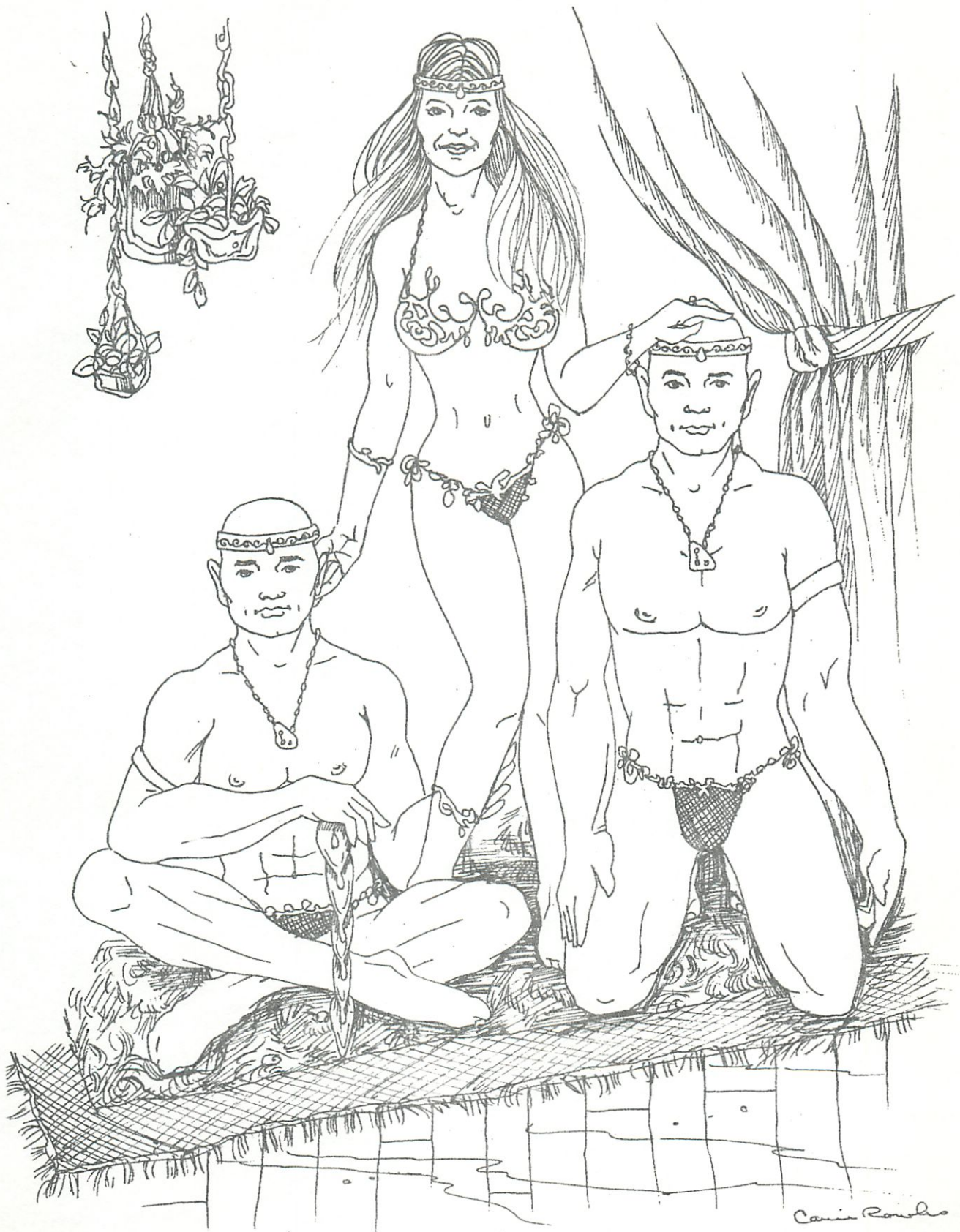




T'Klāl (DAWNSINGER)

7809.29





The Fiery Void

as if by SCOTT

Aye, Lord, terrible is Your void,
Your four-dimensional vastness
depth upon depth upon depth.
One molecule per square kilometer, is it,
or centimeter? No matter.
Infinity times zero is zero.

Traninfinity, though -- another matter:
beyond the last barrier the tachyons roam,
behind the veil of time
that hides Your face. And what is man,
O Lord, that Ye allow us to rend that veil?
Aleph-null and counting, off we go
into the wild blue of the other side,
perhaps to penetrate infinity itself.

Ach! And a grand gift it is Ye gie us!

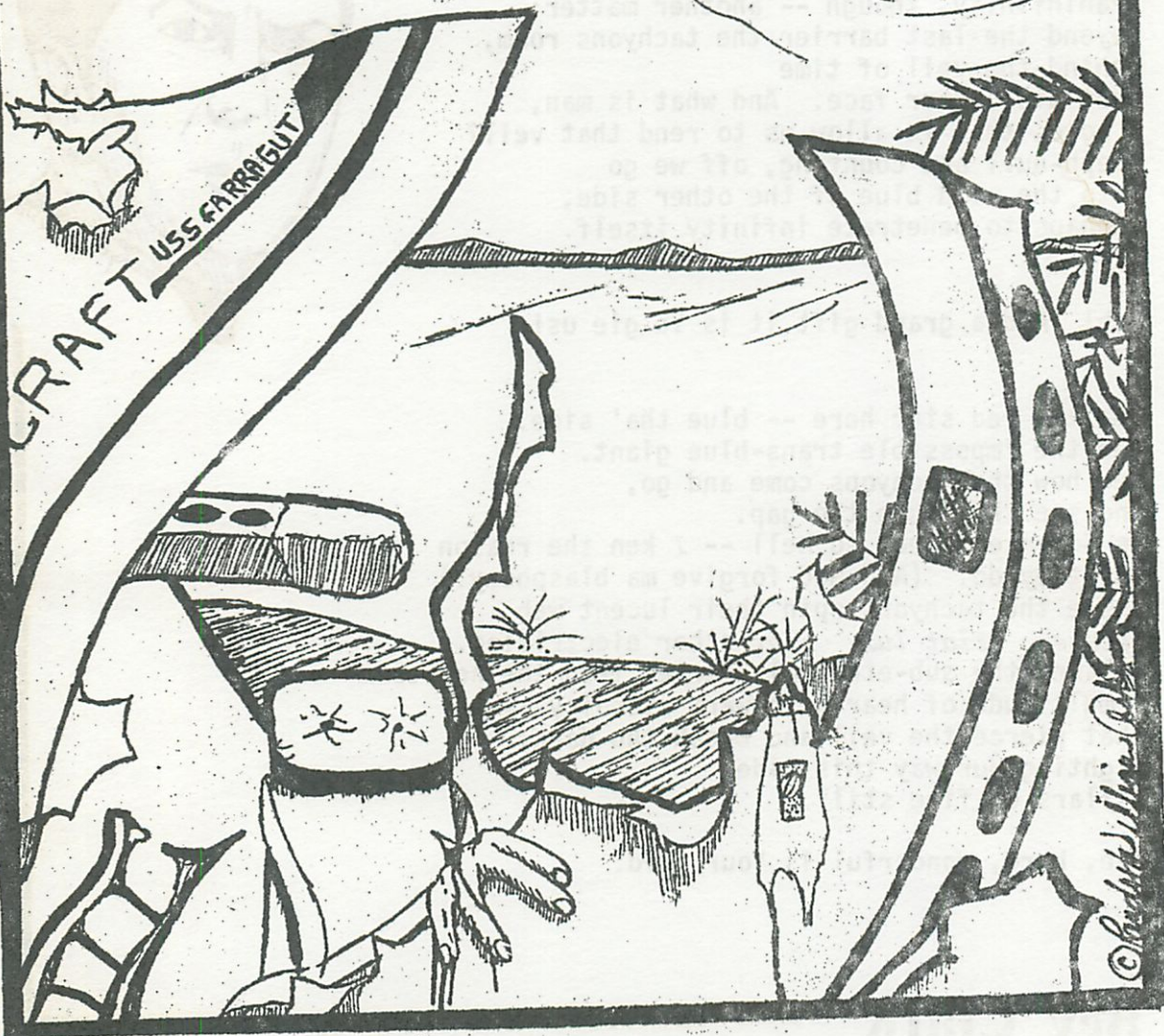
See the red star here -- blue tha' side.
See the impossible trans-blue giant.
See how the tachyons come and go,
and see them jump the gap.
Be Science damned to Hell -- *I* ken the reason
why they do. (And God forgive ma blasphemy.)
I see the tachyons spin their lucent web
between. Fiat lux. Fiat ether electrified.
Aflame, the sub-ethereal ateries feed the hearts --
a multitude of hearts to warm eternity --
that pierce the veil and break the dark,
lighting our way this side,
pillars of fire still.

Aye, Lord, wonderful is Your void.

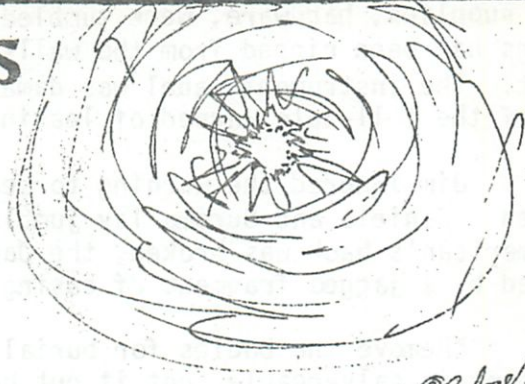


Bev Clark

Rite Of Passage



by Gerald Roberts



As the throb of the All Purpose Craft intensified, Lt. James T. Kirk raised his head to listen. Something was wrong! The ship was coming in too fast, too low. Kirk ran from the main tent, closely followed by the other four members of the survey team.

"Damn! He's not going to make it!" Tall Trees was shocked from his usual calm.

Kirk forced himself to respond as though to a routine mischance of war. "Down, everyone. Assume protective positions," he ordered. He threw himself face downward on the ground and wrapped his arms protectively around his head. With one-half of his mind he willed the pilot of the APCraft to pull out of his crash dive. *Thirac, no. Oh, my friend, land safely!*

His prayers were of no avail. The APCraft crashed nose first, flipped end-over-end, and came to rest drunkenly on its side, half in, half out of the spring-fed pool that watered the oasis. The impact was so great the ship broke amidships like an eggshell and the ground shuddered under the crash.

The after-shocks ceased. Kirk raised his head from the ground. His face was bleak as he absorbed the full disaster of the shattered remains of the survey ship. *He could ... No-one could have lived through that. Thirac ... Daniels ... Suromu.*

Rising, he ran to the wreck, automatically fitting the size of his steps to the lighter gravity of the small planet. In the thin air his breathing became more ragged with his exertions.

He clambered into the interior of the APCraft through a gaping, sharp-edged hole torn through the side of the ship. He was follow-

ed closely by the others. The bluewhite brilliance of the sun streamed through jagged holes sliced in the roof and walls of the ship. Jim looked around. The crash had made a shambles of the interior. Equipment, supplies, hardware, were tumbled haphazardly together. Machine casings had been ripped from the walls, so great had been the force of impact. The instrument panel was damaged beyond repair, and the red glow of the tell-tale warned of leaking radiation.

Jim ignored the warning to search for the bodies of his three crewmen. Daniels and Suromu lay jumbled in the rear section of the APC. The American's back was broken, the Japanese researcher's jugular was severed by a jagged fragment of casing. Kirk motioned the others.

"Remove the bodies for burial," he ordered, "and if any of this equipment is salvageable, get it out before this whole place fills with water."

Kirk threaded his way to the pilot's section. He allowed himself one glance at the pilot's console, then shut his eyes tightly. The image stayed with him, burned into his mind. Thirac lay in the wreckage, his fragile body as broken as the small craft he'd been piloting: slender neck bent to an impossible angle, antennae lying limp and drained of life-force, blue blood coagulating to amethyst pools on the stark white floor.

Oh Thirac! You'd not be here but for my friendship. And you would still be alive if I hadn't sent you out on survey. My first command. And three crewmen, including you, are dead. Suspicious moisture stung Kirk's eyes and he kept them closed a minute longer. The pain of loss -- of shared laughter now stilled, of future plans now halted -- was there and would not lessen for some time. But for now I have the living to worry about. Please understand, my friend.

Jim opened his eyes. He looked at his friend's broken body one more time. *Good-bye, Thirac, I shall mourn you when I am able.* Squaring his shoulders, the young lieutenant called back to the rear of the APCraft, "P'tar, help me, please. Meg, come check out if any of the communications or navigational equipment can still be used."

The red glow from the pilot's console finally drew his attention. *Damn! More complications!* He raised his voice so all four could hear. "And crew, hurry. She's leaking radiation. I can't afford to lose anyone else." *Dear Lord, no. No more deaths!* "We've a time limit now, so move it!"

*

The burial service was brief. As leader of the survey team, Kirk officiated. He spoke a few appropriate words over the hastily dug graves of Daniels and Suromu and checked to make sure the small packets

containing their personal effects were labelled and packed.

He steeled himself. *I can finish my chore. I must.* Despite the overwhelming heat, he felt strangely chilled. He turned to the on-lookers. "Could you leave now? The Andorian service for the dead is a very private thing." *And Thirac, when you told me of your grandfather's funeral, did you ever think you were describing your own?*

By Andorian tradition, Thirac's body should be burnt, his ashes scattered to the wind while prayers were said for the safe flight of his soul to the galactic core. But the available wood supply was inadequate to meet the demands of a funeral pyre. Jim took out his phaser. Turning the controls to their highest setting, he pointed the weapon at the body.

"Fly free, friend of my youth; fly free, brother of my soul. With the destruction of your mortal housing may all the ties that bind you here be severed, and may your soul find haven." Jim pulled the trigger and the Andorian's body disappeared in a flare of fiery pin-lights.

The sickly-sweet smell of charred flesh hung on the air a brief second, then disapated into the opal-hued sky. Jim quieted his churning stomach. He stood still a minute or two longer. The noon-time temperature, even on the shaded oasis, was over 100°F. But as he reholstered his phaser, Jim still felt chilled.

"Jim." Meg's voice released him from the pain of memories.

He turned to her quickly. "Yes, Meg?"

"Leakage from the wreck has contaminated the water supply, and the explosion destroyed the condenser. We could patch up a field distillation unit, but --" Meg's face was tense, her voice worried.

"Damn! And the *Farragut's* not due back for what, three months?" Meg nodded.

Jim rubbed his temples thoughtfully. Then, shading his eyes from the omni-present glare, he looked west to the subtly shortened horizon. Somewhere out there the desert ended and a ragged mountain range began. And where there were mountains there might be water, and growing things, and respite from the heat. *The closest oasis in any other direction is over seven hundred miles away. If the mountains are closer...*

"All right, sound general alarm. Tell everyone to prepare for evacuation. Be sure they pack survival gear first, scientific equipment second. I just buried three of my crew. I don't want to bury any more."

"Understood, Jim. I'll alert the staff."

"Thank you, Meg. Are the tapes from yesterday's fly-by processed?"

"On your desk."

"Good. They should contain information on a mountain range to our west. I remember flying over it when we came down from the *Farragut* to establish this base, and thinking it might make a good future operations outpost, but I'm not sure of its exact location. I think Odile mentioned the range yesterday at supper, and I want to check the report. Meanwhile, have the staff assembled, ready to depart, by 0200 hours." Meg nodded.

Jim turned and strode into his tent. He picked up the tape from yesterday's survey flight, inserted it into the recorder, and played it through.

He shut off the recorder once the tape ran out. As he had thought, the western range provided their best chance. Kirk's face assumed a set, determined look as he viewed the logistical problems involved in moving the camp 500 miles across the burning heat of the Surtian desert on foot. *Difficult's an understatement*, he told himself. *But it's our only chance.*

He took the report from the recorder and put in a blank tape. He recorded the basic information about the crash, the deaths, the water supply contamination, the decision to leave the base camp and head for the mountains. Jim set the recorder on automatic replay/wide band broadcast and switched on a distress beacon. The *Farragut* would be alerted to trouble as soon as it came in range of the beacon.

Jim packed a survival kit and checked out his protective suit. Despite heavy usage the suit was in good order. Jim pulled it on over his uniform and attached a hastily assembled utility belt around his waist. He slung a tightly packed supply bag on his shoulder. He hesitated, then picked up the long-range beacon. He looked around the tent. *Guess that's it. Might as well check the progress of the others.* He left the tent. The sound of an altercation caught his attention.

Meg was arguing with Tall Trees. Jim grinned wryly, sorrows momentarily pushed to the back of his mind. *Those two would find something to argue about in hell.* He looked at the blistering white sky. *And I'm not sure we're not there now.*

Jim put the beacon with the rest of the equipment being gathered and dropped his back-pack down. He joined the two disputants.

"... possible importance can be placed on a package of survey

data and half-computed research findings?", Meg was demanding heatedly.

"We were sent here to do a job, Cunningham. If we leave this information behind we'll have failed in our mission. This is a survey team. We've spent fifteen days gathering this data. We've only *begun* to analyze it. Once the *Farragut's* specialists get to work on it, who knows what they might not discover." The AmerIndian bio-chemist's reply was -- for him -- just as heated.

"Yes, it's important data," Meg conceded. "But Tall Trees, at this point it's dead weight with no survival value."

Tall Trees was not convinced. Jim decided it was time to intervene, particularly since Meg was following *his* instructions.

"She's right, Ensign. We've 500 miles of open desert to cross, and it'll be blistering sunlight all the way. We can't afford an ounce of excess baggage."

"But sir, our job ... "

"Is to stay alive. I know we're here to survey the planet for UFP exploitation. But the data tapes can be reclaimed at a later date. If they're ruined by radiation we can send a new survey team. Surt is rich enough in minerals and fossil fuels to support the extra effort."

The AmerIndian bit his lip, still reluctant to part with the material he'd spent so long a time collecting.

"Tall Trees, we can always gather knowledge. Lives are a different story. And *nothing* must endanger the lives of my men further."

The AmerIndian looked into his lieutenant's pain-ridden eyes. "Yes sir. I'll repack."

"Thank you."

Jim watched Tall Trees enter his tent. The young lieutenant then turned to Meg. "How many more times will we have that argument to-day?"

"Tall Trees was the last hold-out, Jim. The others understood the reason for your orders immediately. It's just that, well, to Tall Trees *life* is a scientific experiment. He doesn't really live it, he weighs and measures it." She paused considerably, then added, "I think he sometimes forgets we're not all in a controlled experiment."

Jim grunted. "The truly dedicated scientist. Yes, they often can't see beyond their immediate projects. They've almost destroyed the world several times now."



"I don't think Tall Trees is that bad, Jim. Just young and still enthralled with learning."

Despite himself, Jim gave a shout of laughter. "Yes, grandma. How perceptive for one of your advanced years. You're what, all of twenty-four or so?"

"Twenty-two. And I wouldn't talk if I were you! *You're* the one who's the fair-haired boy around Starfleet circles."

Jim sobered, his momentary lightening of spirits gone.

"*Was* the fair-haired boy, Meg. *Was.*"

He walked over to the pile of equipment being assembled. He looked at it thoughtfully, wondering if there were any way to cut supplies safely. But how? There were too many things that could not be left behind -- not without endangering lives.

Tall Trees came from his tent, added his choice to the pile, then stood to one side. *Again the observer, always the observer. He could learn -- could have learned so much from you, Thirac.*

Tall Trees had been the last to assemble. Jim grimaced as he faced his remaining crew.

"This is where I give a pep-talk, assure you we'll muddle through against impossible odds, and break into a rousing chorus of the Academy Marching

Song. At least, that's what always happens on the trideo."

He paused for effect, then went on. "Well, forget it. We'll be facing sheer hell out there. But we've no other options. If we stay here we'll die of radiation in two weeks. The *Farragut* is out of range and isn't due back for three months. That leaves us one choice. Walk through the desert. So check your gear, make sure you have everything you may need and nothing you won't. Then let's move out."

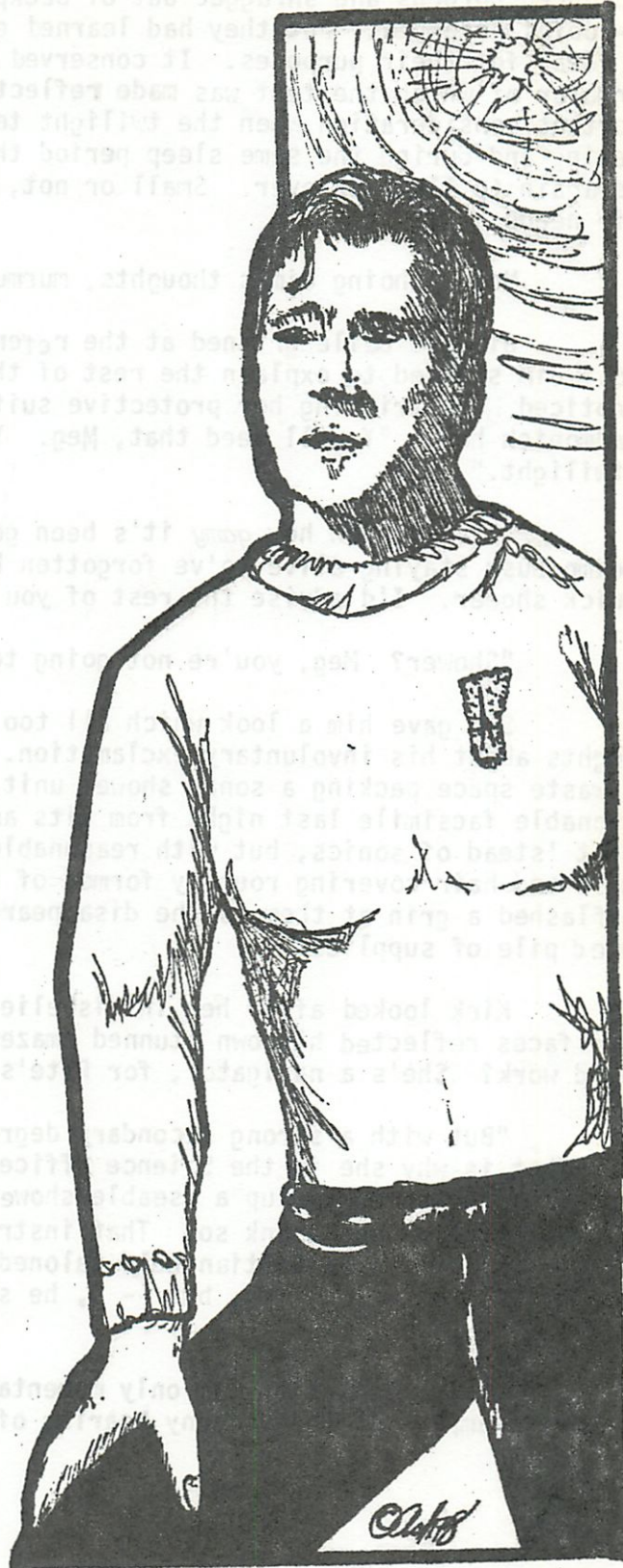
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Take a double sun system. Two bluewhite suns blazing in fiery splendor, revolving around one another in a never ending dance, a stately minuet bringing first Jotun, then Muspel to the fore.

Add a harsh-baked desert world looping around both suns in a complex figure eight orbit. The result would be daylight, eternal daylight save for brief periods of sudden twilight when short-lived sand storms would spring up because of the abrupt thermal inversion. It would be Surt.

*

Muspel hung low on the shortened horizon, a swollen fruit ripe for the plucking. The brief Surtian twilight would soon be upon them, and Jim wanted the small tent safely secured before then. Cocking his head thoughtfully, he tested the magneto-braces.



He nodded in satisfaction. They held securely.

Jim signalled the others. They entered the tent and gratefully dropped burdens and shrugged out of backpacks. The tent was small, low-roofed, cramped. But they had learned early that this configuration was ideal for their purposes. It conserved internal heat while the thermalur of which the tent was made reflected the suns' rays -- both important consideration when the twilight temperatures often fell to freezing and during the same sleep period the temperature would then rise again to 110°F or over. Small or not, the tent was perfect for their needs.

Meg, echoing Jim's thoughts, murmured, "Be it ever so humble."

Jim and Odile grinned at the reference, but P'tar looked puzzled. Jim started to explain the rest of the quote to the Caitian when he noticed Meg stripping her protective suit. He interrupted himself to admonish her. "You'll need that, Meg. You know how cold it'll get at twilight."

"I also know how *gamy* it's been getting lately. We've been so damn busy staying alive we've forgotten how to be civilized. I'm for a quick shower. I'd advise the rest of you to do the same."

"Shower? Meg, you're not going to waste ... "

She gave him a look which all too clearly indicated her thoughts about his involuntary exclamation. "Of course not! And I didn't waste space packing a sonar shower unit. But I patched together a reasonable facsimile last night from bits and pieces. It uses ultraviolet 'stead of sonics, but with reasonable precautions," she held up a mask and hair covering roughly formed of thermalur, "it should work." She flashed a grin at them as she disappeared behind a conveniently stowed pile of supplies.

Kirk looked after her in disbelief. He turned to the others. Their faces reflected his own stunned amazement. "Patched together? Should work? She's a navigator, for Pete's sake!"

"But with a strong secondary degree in engineering, Jamessakirak. That is why she is the Science Officer on this team. She could, conceivably, have worked up a useable shower system." P'tar grimaced. "But somehow I do not think so. That instrument, it does not -- it does not *sound* right." The Caitian held taloned hands up to his ears. "I know that is not scientific, but -- ", he shrugged helplessly, "that is all I can say."

Jim's hesitation was only momentary. He had been witness to too many examples of the uncanny hearing of the Caitians. "There is danger?"

P'tar nodded.

Jim was galvanized to action. He was conscious of only one thought, one driving need. *Meg. No. You must not be hurt.* He knocked aside the boxes that had formed Meg's dressing room and grabbed the slender wand-like object from her hand.

He switched off the pulsating machine. Meg ripped off the mask and hair covering and faced him furiously, a towel tightly clutched about her.

"All right, Jim, we've become a family group because of the pressures we're under. But there *are* limits. And having to shower in public is one of them, as far as I'm concerned. If you'll return my shower-head, *Mister Kirk*, I'll finish what I started."

She reached out her hand for the wand. Jim ignored her hand and her anger to anxiously examine her shoulders, her arms. In spite of his highly attuned hearing, could P'tar have been wrong? *No, her skin is reddening already.* "Meg, you idiot, who but you would spend seven days in the blistering sunlight only to get a sunburn indoors and at twilight, no less?"

Her anger was defused. "Sunburn? What -- ?" She looked in horror at the redness appearing in a visible wave along her hands and arms. "I -- I guess I miscalculated."

"To say the least. Odile!" Jim raised his voice. Almost before he completed his call the petite medical technician was there, medi-kit ready to hand.

"Oh, Meg!" she exclaimed when she saw the angry red burns on the other woman. Then, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, she opened her kit and waved Jim away.

"You'll be okay, Meg," Jim said over his shoulder. He joined the others. "I don't know," he responded to their questioning glances. "Odile hasn't finished her examination yet." He turned to P'tar. "You saved her life. She's been burned, but I don't think seriously."

Odile and Meg, the latter holding herself stiffly in a cocoon of wrappings, came from behind the barrier. Jim hurried to Meg's side and escorted her to the soft nest P'tar fashioned from several unopened sleeping bags. "How do you feel?", he asked anxiously.

She searched his face, gave his arm a reassuring squeeze. "I'm okay, truly I am. You stopped me just in time, Odile says. Some bad burns on my back and shoulders, but nothing critical." She drew a deep breath. "And nothing that will leave a scar. I'll be in pain for a while, but when haven't we been on this trek?"

"God, but you scared me -- us, woman. Don't ever do that again."

Meg frowned thoughtfully, ignoring the personal content of Jim's comment. "But it should have worked. I don't see why it didn't. I'll have to recalculate -- ." She lost herself in mental arithmetic.

Jim threw up his hands in disgust. "The woman almost dies, and all she's worried about is why her calculations didn't work." He looked dourly at Tall Trees. "No wonder she understands you so well. I never realized it before, but you're two of a kind." Jim turned to Odile. "Is she really all right?"

The young Hungarian tech smiled. "She'll be fine, Jim. Fortunately, she has enough melanin in her skin to block some of the rays emitted by *that* -- that *thing* she invented."

"Thanks, Odile." Jim turned back to Meg. "Meg, believe me, I'd rather put up with the grubbiness, the discomfort, the -- the lack of civilization, than risk you. Or *any* of my crew. Don't do that again."

"I'll be careful." Jim realized she had evaded the issue and had ignored his terms, but he contented himself with this half-promise.

Meg's accident affected everyone. In spite of exhaustion and the sure knowledge of facing still other wearying days, neither Jim nor the others could relax. Physical exercise would have eased the tension, but the tent was too small to allow for easy pacing..

Moreover, twilight had fallen outside, and the winds that rose with the drop in temperature drove before them sand-storms of such ferocity and magnitude that they would scour the flesh from their bones.

Conversation became desultory, tempers frayed. Odile, one hand unconsciously playing with a strand of hair, poked unseeingly through her pack with the other. P'tar's tail lashed back and forth lazily, and Tall Trees shifted uneasily in his seat.

The others feel it too. Even Tall Trees. Jim looked at his hands. They had begun to shake. We can't keep this up. The pace we keep by day is killing us and the tension by night is driving us mad.

Jim raised his head, attention on the wailing wind once more. *Surt may be uninhabited, but her winds are certainly ghost-ridden.*

The five young officers continued with 'make-do' activities for some time. Jim finally suggested, "We have an early start tomorrow, so let's turn in now." Sleeping bags were arranged close to one another for added warmth. The heater was set on automatic, the lights doused, and they huddled together beneath their thermal blankets.

Pressed close between Meg and P'tar, Jim forced himself to lay still. He stared at the roof of the shelter, scarcely noticing where it bulged in several places as sand was blown about by the twinight's winds. Sleep had been purchased at great cost during the past week, and he knew it would come no cheaper for him tonight. The winds still howled: *Banshee on the roof, death in the home. Glad I'm not superstitious.*

Jim shut out the wind and listened to his team-mates. Muffled grunts and hastily suppressed groans proved they, also, were finding sleep an elusive goal. Jim dreaded closing his eyes, knowing that when he did so he would see Thirac. Thirac as he had been at the Academy, on vacations, aboard their first ship, on missions together. Thirac as he had seen him last.

Jim drew a shuddering breath. *I could not prevent the accident, Thirac. Meg says the engine was destroyed by sand and radiation and could have gone at any time. But you were part of my crew. I was -- I am responsible for my crew. Command is more than a pretty suit. It is being responsible for lives, for deaths. Why did it take your death for me to learn that?*

Physical exhaustion finally took its toll. The shelter quieted. Soon, the only sound within the tent was the quickening throb of P'tar's nocturnal breathing, the hushed gurgle of Odile's gentle snores. Outside, the winds gradually died.

*

Doggedly, defying fate and every god or demon he had ever heard of, James T. Kirk forced his weary legs to move onward. His body was drenched with sweat. His refrigeration unit had given out many miles back, and the reflective surface of his life support suit offered only minimal protection against temperatures often in excess of 110°F. The waste-product-recycler could not keep pace with his body. The incessant whine of its 'overload' indicator droned in his ears.

He nursed his oxygen supply carefully, as he had only a few hours left in his tanks. Jim had his air system valve set on 'intake'. As much as he dared, he breathed only the atmosphere of Surt, thin and oxygen poor though that might be.

The featureless expanse of white and pastel sand that stretched in front of him transformed itself into a silken, blue-green world of lush vegetation. He and Thirac walked beneath the spreading, protective arms of the knarba tree. The Surtian desert and its cyclic, unstable suns became distant memories. Andor's cool red sun filtered its gentle light through the large, fan-shaped leaves of the tree. Thirac reached up, plucked a large golden fruit, and held it up laughingly.

"Here, James, is nectar of the gods. Come. Feast with me."

The Andorian bit into the firm, ripe meat of the fruit. Mouth full, he exclaimed, "But it is perfect! Come, he-who-is-my-brother. Eat of the fruit." He handed the large pear-like fruit to Jim.

Jim looked at Thirac, whose face was slicked with fruit and juice. Then, hoping his immunization and acclimation shots had taken effect, he bit into the knarba. A smile lit his face. The fruit was poetry, music, and delight. It was...

Several loud screams and the scuffling of a struggle jolted him back to reality. He spun around. The others had fallen behind, and were still at the foot of the dune he had just crested. The shouts continued. A dust cloud, stirred by frantic feet, almost obscured the action. Jim could barely make out P'tar struggling with the other members of the party. Jim was stunned and watched in horror as the smallest of the figures clinging to the Caitian was flung to one side.

Jim dropped his gear and slid down the slope to the struggling group.

P'tar flung off the others. The Caitian staggered a few feet off and ripped the protective suit from his body with a few frenzied movements. Rasping, pain-logged croaks came from his mouth. He lurched a few feet further through the clinging, tenacious sand, then fell to his knees.

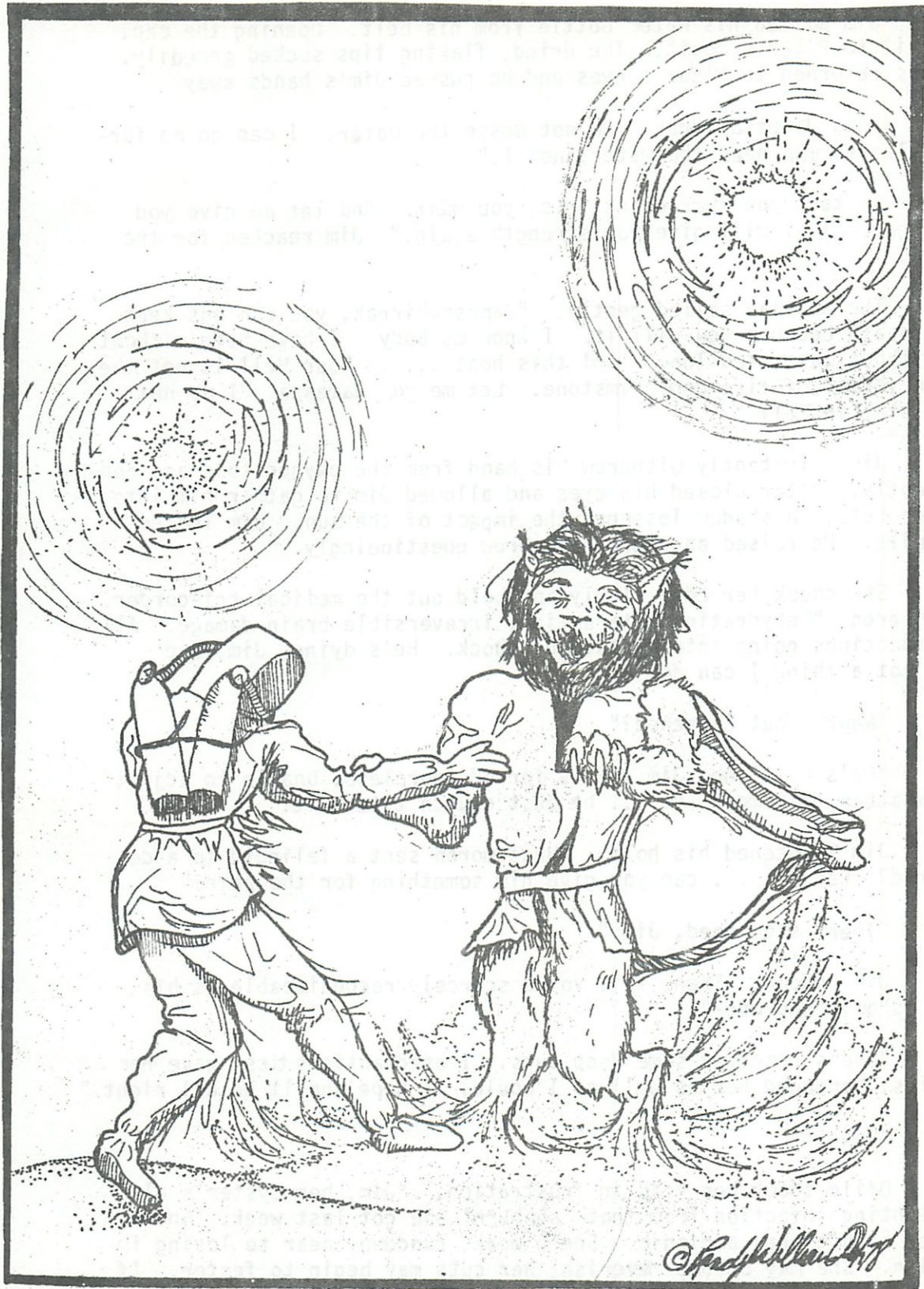
Meg reached him first and tried to help him up. He turned on her savagely. Meg's cry was one of surprise. She glanced down at herself, then at P'tar, who stood looking dazedly at the blood dripping from his claws.

"Meg?" P'tar's question was soft, anxious, sane once more. As one, the two crumpled to the ground. It had happened within the space of a breath, even as the others were floundering through the sand to P'tar.

Jim reached Meg first. She was bleeding heavily from several deep wounds, but the flow of blood was steady. *Thank God! No arteries cut,* Jim thought. There was nothing he could do for her that Odile could not do better.

Jim went to P'tar. The Caitian lay face down in the sand. His helmet had been knocked off and his oxygen tanks registered zero. Jim knelt at P'tar's side and gently turned him over. The Caitian gasped for air. His dry, sand-coated tongue hung from his mouth. His eyes, closed to slits against the driving force of the sun, were unseeing.

Jim cradled P'tar's head in his arms. He looked for the feline's water bottle. It had fallen to the ground. The cap, which had not been securely tightened, had come off. The bottle was empty, bone-dry.



Jim pulled his water bottle from his belt. Opening the cap, he held it to P'tar's mouth. The dried, flaking lips sucked greedily. Awareness returned to P'tar's eyes and he pushed Jim's hands away.

"No, Jamessakirrak. Do not waste the water. I can go no further. Please, *you* need the water, not I."

"P'tar, you *must* drink this, you *must*. And let me give you some oxygen. That will give you strength again." Jim reached for the air-hose.

The Caitian smiled gently. "Jamessakirrak, you can not keep me from death because you will it. I know my body. I have been without food, without water too long. And this heat Your Hell is not the only one formed of fire and brimstone. Let me go, Jamessa. I do not want to stay in Hell."

Jim reluctantly withdrew his hand from the oxygen tube and nodded silently. P'tar closed his eyes and allowed Jim to gather him into a tighter hold. A shadow lessened the impact of the sun. Jim looked up at Odile. He raised an expressive brow questioningly.

She shook her head slowly and held out the medical tri-corder. She whispered, "Dehydration, starvation, irreversible brain damage. All bodily functions going into a state of shock. He's dying, Jim, and there's not a thing I can do."

"*Why?* What happened?"

"He's a feline, Jim. He's furred, poreless, unable to adjust to the weather extremes. He ... he just couldn't take it."

Jim tightened his hold. "What moron sent a felinoid to a desert world? Can you ... can you give him something for the pain?"

"There's no need, Jim."

Jim nodded. Then, in a voice scarcely recognizable as his own, he asked, "And Meg?"

"She's received some deep cuts. I used antiseptics, gave her antibodies, bandaged her as well as I could. I hope she'll be all right."

"Hope?"

Odile shook her head in frustration. "Jim, her system's already fighting infection from that 'sunburn' she got last week. And this trek hasn't been a picnic. She's weak, rundown, near to losing immunization. She may become feverish, her cuts may begin to fester. If infection sets in" Her voice trailed off despairingly.

"Her suit?"

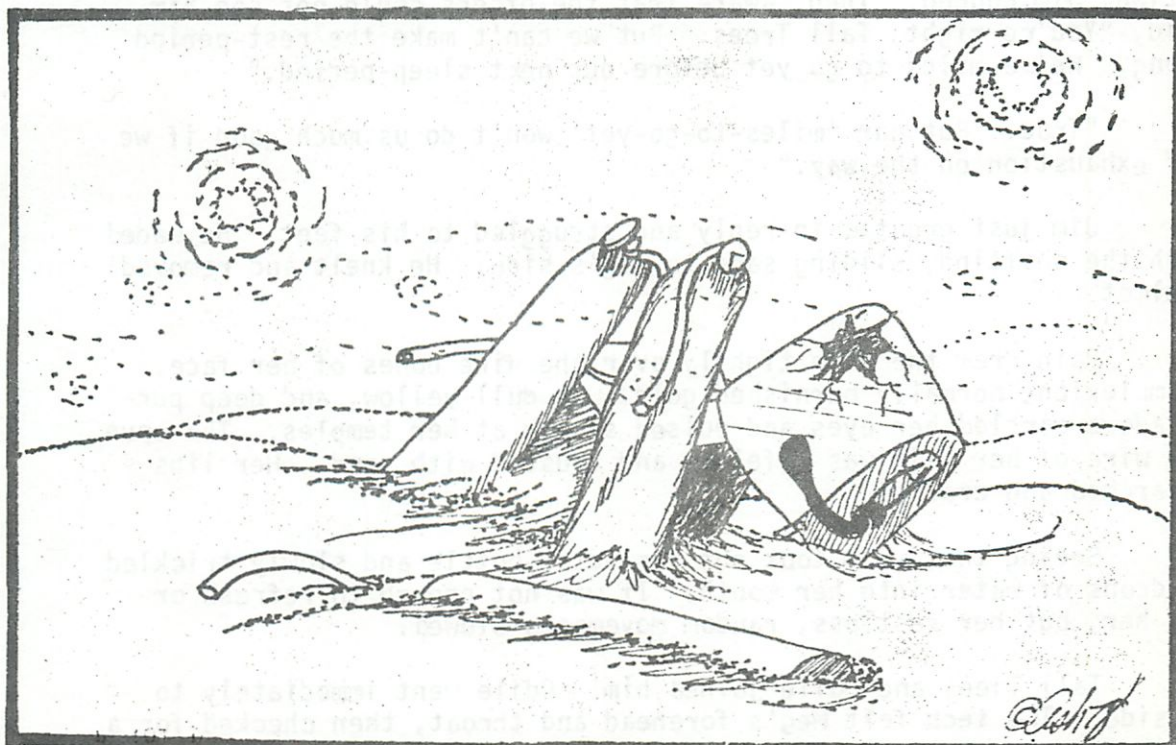
"Tall Trees is patching it. He thinks he can make it air and water tight again."

Jim sat quietly. Then, shaking his head to clear his vision, he said, "Thank you, Odile. You and Tall Trees get the gear together, stay with Meg. I'll -- I'll stay with P'tar."

The end, when it came, was quick. P'tar gave a rasping choke and opened his eyes. He focused on Jim's face and smiled. Claws sheathed, he brushed Jim's face with his hand. His eyes closed and his labored breathing stilled.

For the second time, Kirk officiated at a funeral service for one of his crew. A shallow grave was dug. P'tar's body, already mummified in the arid atmosphere, was tightly wrapped in a thermal blanket and was lowered into the ground. Jim recited a few brief lines and threw in the first shovelful of dirt, then Tall Trees and Odile bent to help. The grave was soon closed, but they had nothing with which to mark the grave site.

"Damn! He's the first Caitian to die in Starfleet Service -- thanks to the moron who assigned him to a *desert* world. He deserves *some* kind of memorial." In frustration, the young officer filled several empty oxygen tanks with sand. He weighed down P'tar's helmet with these. It was impermanent, and might be blown away by the twinight wind, but for now, when they looked back, they would know where their former companion lay buried.



*

Sand. Always sand. Ever and ever. Is there really a world of crystal blue water, of ice locked polar caps, called Earth? Or is that a dream -- a dream only?

Kirk lay face down on the crest of yet another nameless, featureless dune. The harsh blue-white brilliance of Muspel burned almost directly overhead, and for the past week the conviction had grown in the young lieutenant that he could measure the sun's instability through the flickering edges of the harsh black shadows it threw.

Raising his head wearily, he watched such a shadow, mesmerized. He lay there several seconds more, lungs laboring fitfully in the sand-laden atmosphere. Despite the heat, the difficulty in breathing, the ubiquitous sand, he felt his eyes closing and his head dropping. With a start, he forced himself awake and slowly levered himself into a sitting position.

A choking cough, abruptly broken off, brought Jim's attention to his left. He looked over at Meg, lying next to him in the sand. She had fainted again. Jim painfully hunkered around. Tall Trees and Odile were still some distance back. Even as he watched, Odile waved wearily and Tall Trees's deep bass voice sounded in his ear-phones. "We're still here behind you, Jim. We'll make it to you, then I think we could all use a rest."

Cognizant of his own weariness, of Meg's rapidly deteriorating condition, Jim nodded. Then, aware that the others could not see him, he said, "You're right, Tall Trees. But we can't make the rest-period too long. We've miles to go yet before our next sleep-period."

"True. But our 'miles-to-go-yet' won't do us much good if we die of exhaustion on the way."

Jim just grunted in reply and struggled to his feet. He waded through the shifting, sliding sand to Meg's side. He knelt and removed her helmet.

Pain drew the skin tightly over the fine bones of her face. Her complexion, normally burnished gold, was dull yellow, and deep purple shadows circled her eyes and pulsed slowly at her temples. The spun copper wire of her hair was lifeless and crusted with sand. Her lips were parched and cracked.

Seeing this, Jim took out his water bottle and slowly trickled a few drops of water into her mouth. It was not enough to refresh or revive her, but her restless, random movements slowed.

Tall Trees and Odile joined him. Odile went immediately to Meg's side. The tech felt Meg's forehead and throat, then checked for a

pulse. She looked up. "I was afraid of this. Those cuts are infected. She's burning up."

"Should we try to wake her," Jim asked anxiously. Shoving his face plate back with one hand, he tried to wipe his face clean of clinging sand particles with the other.

"Jim, I can't make that decision. She's ill, yes. Under normal conditions I'd say she should stay in bed at least four days. But, these aren't normal conditions."

Jim nodded. *It all boils down to this. I am the leader. Mine the responsibility. I just hope I'm right -- and strong enough to make the right choice stick.*

"Meg, Meg." Jim slapped her face softly. "Get up. We have to move out now."

Meg opened dulled, unfocused eyes. She said nothing, but weakly tried to push away Jim's insistent hands.

Jim shook her, gently at first, then more harshly. "Meg, come on! Don't give up on me, honey. If we don't get started *now* we'll never make it."

"Jim, I think she's coming around," Odile's soft voice interrupted.

Meg's eyes were fluttering. She brought them into focus. "Hi," she said in a weak, cracked voice. "Have I been away long?"

Jim tried to smile at her courage. He glanced up at Muspel, now a scant measurement further along to the west than it had been at his last position check. "Just a few minutes," he finally responded. "Next time, though, let me know before you decide to go on vacation, OK? Come on, now, we have to get started."

Jim helped Meg to her feet. The effort to rise left her trembling, and she clung to him for support. He beckoned Odile over. The med tech came to Meg's side. She checked Meg's pulse and temperature, then nodded to Jim. Giving a sigh of relief he replaced the helmet of Meg's life support suit, adjusting the visor's sun-filter and making sure the filtration tube was not clogged with sand.

He repeated these actions with his own equipment and adjusted his own goggles. Jim looked around anxiously. The long range beacon was still where he'd dropped it. Jim hefted that in one hand and put his other arm around Meg's shoulder.

Meg clung to him, trying to recoup some of her strength. Odile and Tall Trees gathered together their own equipment and part of Meg's.

The sand was very loosely packed, and with each step they sank deeply. Walking was an endurance test. If Surt's gravity had been Earth-normal, Kirk knew they would never have made it even this far.

They had gone barely twenty yards when Meg stumbled again and fell heavily to the ground, pulling Kirk down also. Unable to catch their footing in the treacherous, shifting sands, both young officers slipped and slid downhill. Jim dropped the beacon and it tumbled after them to the base of the dune.

"Jim! Meg! Are you two all right?" Odile's anxious voice asked over their earphones.

Jim looked at Meg, who lay half-buried, trying dazedly to catch her breath. "We -- we're all right!", he advised the worried tech. He turned to Meg. "That was a sneaky way to avoid walking, Meg."

Despite her obvious pain, Meg's eyes flickered in response. "It -- it got us wh-where we wanted to -- to go," she gasped.

Jim struggled to his feet. The sand dragged at every footstep as he trudged over to Meg. He held out his hand and she used it to lever herself up. Leaning part of her weight on him, she gave a choking laugh. "I don't think much of the way you treat your dates, Jim."

Jim smiled but made no other response. The others joined them. Odile quickly checked them out. "You both need rest, and that instantly."

"We can't, Odile, and you know it."

Odile nodded glumly. Jim had been anxiously looking at Tall Trees meanwhile. He noted in consternation that the Amerind officer's face was drenched with sweat and that he was rigid with tension. "Are you okay, Tall Trees?"

"I thought I knew what my body could and couldn't do -- and now I find I have less strength, less endurance than I'd thought."

Jim nodded and smiled grimly. He knew, from his own condition, the truth of Tall Trees's statement. Nevertheless, they still had miles to cover. Jim signalled them to start out again.

There was a lack of identifiable landmarks by which to plot an easy course. The white sands of the desert wasteland spread without a break to the horizon, and the daily configurations of the land changed at the whim of the winds. Overhead, Muspel, followed always in short order by Jotun, sailed on. Both suns were supremely unaware of the four tiny life-forms clinging to Surt's surface so tenaciously -- and so pitifully ill-protected from the fury of the double suns.

Time melted into a senseless blur of flame-filled days and too short sleep periods. They pressed on in a straight northwesterly direction, stopping only for small tastes of water and oxygen, for snatched sleep periods during the brief hours of twilight. They had lost count of the number of days they had been on the desert when Meg lapsed into delirium. An automaton, she continued unknowingly to put one foot before the other.

Jim's worries grew. The emergency medical supplies were almost gone, and there was little else that Odile could do for Meg, or for any of them. "Hold on until we get to the oasis, Meg, honey," he pleaded. "Just hold on!"

He was aware that he had begun to use mention of the oasis as a talisman, but against his absolute helplessness he had nothing else to offer. He clutched Meg more tightly. She paid no heed to words or to touch, other than by singing a tuneless song in a haunting minor key.

Jim's entire body was a massive, burning ache. His feet had been dipped into molten lead, then shoved into boots several sizes too small. Someone was sawing through the tendons of his calves and thighs with a dull knife. Thousands of needle-sharp pincers had been attached to his spinal column. Every nerve-ending was sand-papered raw and attached to a live current. Despite the sun-visor and the helmet his eyes were almost blistered closed. Only the fact that his head still rode his shoulders made him believe his throat had not been cut. He envied Meg her oblivion.

*

Sand. Sand everywhere. Sand gritting on teeth and coating thickened tongue. Clogging parched throat and stopping nasal passages. Sharp-edged grains rasping raw eyeballs and lids. Penetrating clothing, clinging to hair, filming skin. Sand. Coarse sand, fine sand. Sand raised with every footstep, drifting in perpetual suspension. Sand.

*

Kirk missed his footing and fell to the ground. Meg, still delirious, still clinging to him, fell too. Jim swore quietly when he realized that he'd let himself sink into daydreams. He rolled over, propped himself on his arms. Meg lay unmoving, dove-grey eyes staring sightlessly, her crooning but a monotone hum.

Meg was growing increasingly weaker. But Jim refused to accept the added burden of another death, and closed his mind against the possibility. "We *will* make it," he insisted, "we will."

Tall Trees and Odile joined them and Jim rose to his feet. Odile checked Meg over carefully, and Tall Trees gathered together the equipment that had spilled when Jim fell. Jim took out his field in-

struments and checked their location. The results seemed impossible and he recalibrated once more.

Cursing his own weakness, he sank wearily into the sand. The second reading verified the initial results -- and portended disaster. During his bout of semi-somnambulism they had drifted from the proper co-ordinates and were now so far south that another day might have to be added to their travel time. And with supplies of air and water as low as they were, and Meg's condition worsening hourly, one day could literally mean the difference between life and death.

Jim straightened determinedly. Their lost mileage would be made up, and be made up now! He rose stiffly. Putting away the macro-binoculars and the sexton, he joined the others.

Odile had removed Meg's helmet and was trying to force some water into her. Jim cringed as the greater share of it dribbled out of Meg's mouth onto the hungry sands.

"Let her have some oxygen, Odile. I think that might help."

Odile nodded and hooked up the tank. The gamble worked. Meg's eyes fluttered as she took deep, gasping breaths of the rich air now filling her suit.

Odile unhooked the oxygen, removed Meg's helmet, and gave her another drink of water. This one was avidly swallowed. Although dangerously bordering on shock, Meg was now conscious and able to travel.

"Okay. Odile, Tall Trees, take an oxygen/water break. It may be the last one in quite a long while. I -- I almost succeeded in losing us. We've got lost time to make up." Jim took a mouthful of water and allowed himself several long breaths of oxygen. It did not really revive him, but it did help.

Jim picked up the beacon. Going to Meg's side, he hauled her to her feet. Steeling himself against her protests, he forced her to continue the march. He signalled the others to follow.

The sand sucked at their feet, dragging them back, making every step a struggle. Jim's entire consciousness was focused on but one purpose, to keep moving, as steadily and as quickly as possible. Each foot weighed a ton, but by sheer force of will Jim managed to pick up first one, then the other, time after time. He had no thought but the need for movement, for speed.

Time and again Jim almost gave up. Only the knowledge that the others needed him, needed his strength and determination to continue, kept him going. *Up, down. Up, down.* The very repetition of thought and action mesmerized him again. *Pick it up, put it down.*

*

Time blurred once more, a continuous white ribbon of pain, sand, and untold sleep-periods.

Another dune faced them. A sloping, shifting, rolling hillock glinting in the blue-white brilliance of the sun overhead. Worriedly, Jim checked the sun's position. More than half the long afternoon had gone by. There was no easy route around the upsloping dune. The rise would have to be crested. Jim grimaced, but the thought of giving up, of resigning, did not enter his mind.

Jim took a tighter hold on Meg and long-distance beacon. He gritted his teeth over his determination to reach the top of the dune. He ploughed on with a burst of initial speed that surprised even himself. *I can do it*, he thought. *I've got to do it.*

His burst of speed, the last desperate edge of a desperate man, soon burned itself out, leaving him more shatteringly exhausted than ever. Lungs drawing ragged breaths of searingly hot air and sand, Jim stumbled to a complete stop and stood there, panting heavily, as Meg flopped rag-doll limp to the sand once more. His hands clenched in futile desperation and he made the frightening discovery that men do, on occasion, cry. *But I can't. I'm so dehydrated I cannot weep the tears I must.*

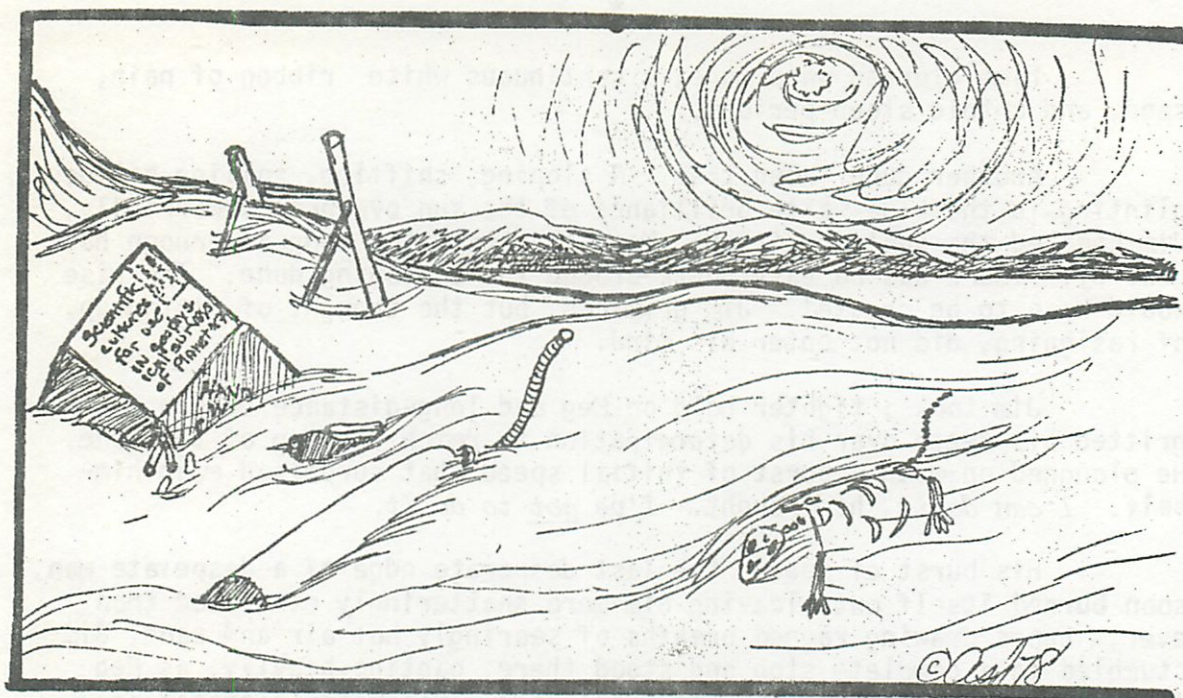
Opening his face mask, he fitfully rubbed blistered, red, bone-dry eyes, monotonously cursing the while. His imprecations grew momentarily in strength and originality as the fine grains of sand clinging to his mitts were ground into his eyes by his actions, exacerbating the situation further. Not only had he no tears to weep, he had no tears with which to wash the sand from his eyes.

Jim blinked sand-paper lids over eyes so tender they felt skinned. He brought his gaze to bear on the crest of the dune. It was higher, and the climb was taking longer than he had thought. *Is there an end to this journey?* In the heat and exhaustion of the last numbing days, Jim had all but lost track of his original goal. His driving need to reach the oasis had been replaced by the simple need to keep going, to stay alive. And being alive, or so he had always been taught, carried with it certain responsibilities.

He bent, shook Meg. Her head bobbed back and forth inside her helmet, and there was no sign she was aware of him.

He straightened. The sound of breathing in his ear-phones grew increasingly strained.

"Tall Trees? Odile? Are you both all right?" He turned and faced them. They were floundering in the shifting, fluid sand of the valley formed by the dune on which Jim stood.



Tall Trees answered first. "Jim, I -- I don't know how much further we can go. I can hardly carry these supplies any more. We may have to start leaving things behind."

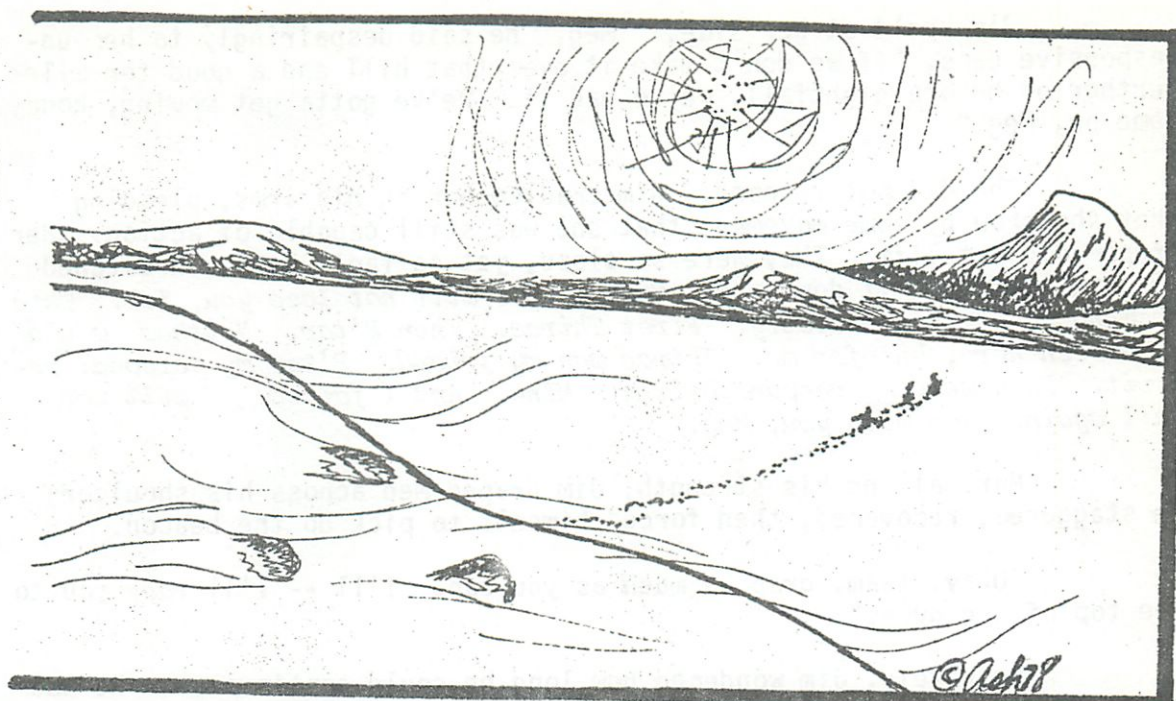
Odile echoed him, adding, "Jim, I never cared for beaches to begin with. Now I've seen enough for the next fifty generations. Have we ever *not* done this?"

"Take a break," Jim ordered. "I'll be right there."

Jim checked Meg's condition once more. There was no change. He hated to leave her, but could see no alternative. He let gravity do most of the work for him as he slid down the slope to the floor of the valley. When he reached the base of the dune he straightened and forced his legs to carry him over to Odile and Tall Trees. They had collapsed in a dispirited huddle.

They looked up as Jim, panting heavily, reached them. They offered weak grins of sympathy. Jim looked at the supplies strewn on the sand. "I don't know *what* we can do without, Tall Trees. Everything here has been a factor in favor of our survival at one point or another."

He paused and looked at the position of the sun thoughtfully. It had been some while since he'd taken their co-ordinates. He took out his sextant and calculator. "Well, we're back on course, and," in growing excitement he turned to the other two, "if I've logged our co-ordinates correctly, we've just about made up our lost time. The foot-hills of the western range should begin about ten or fifteen miles past the other side of *that* mother-dune."



He looked thoughtfully at the supplies. "If we make a concentrated effort, we should reach the foot-hills before Muspel sets." He met Tall Trees's gaze. "Let's face it. If we haven't made it by then, we won't make it at all. We can't last another day. And, if we *have* reached the firmer ground of the foot-hills we should find shelter from the wind-storms with-out need to resort to this." He pointed to the collapsible shelter. "We'll still need the condensation distiller we 'patched together' from sheets of plastene -- not that it's done us much good out here, but still. If worse comes to worse, we might be able to leave behind the heater and some of the other equipment -- anything we can replace with units from our suits, gerry-rigging, or just plain do without. Let's try it."

Discarding many of the items that had served them so well on the desert, but might now be superfluous on the oasis, Jim and the other two shared the burden of the remaining equipment. They packed, then headed for the dune.

Pausing for a quick breath, Jim looked despairingly at the mountain of sand facing him. "It looks higher now than it did before." Forcing themselves to continue, they climbed the dune, floundering and slipping in the treacherous footing.

They reached the point where Jim had left Meg. Depositing her burden on the ground, Odile knelt at Meg's side. Jim and Tall Trees joined the two women. "How is she?", Jim asked worriedly.

"Very little change. She's still feverish, and those cuts aren't responding to medication. At this point, Jim, I honestly can't say what her chances are."

Jim knelt at her side. "Meg," he said despairingly to her unresponsive ears, "if we don't make it over that hill and a good ten miles further on before nightfall, we've had it. We've gotta get moving, honey. Come on, Meg."

She did not respond. Jim cradled her in his arms, pleading that she show by some movement that she was still capable of action. Her stupor did not lift. They were so close, yet so far! Panic threatened him and he forced it down. *No, Meg, no. I will not lose you, too. This command has been too costly. First Thirac. Then P'tar. Neither would have been here, but for me. Thirac was my friend. P'tar my personal recruit. They were my responsibility. Mine. And I failed. I will not fail again. Not with you, Meg.*

Marshalling his strength, Jim draped Meg across his shoulders. He staggered, recovered, then forced himself to pick up the beacon.

"Okay, team, grab as much as you can. I'll -- I'll race you to the top of the dune."

Privately, Jim wondered how long he could continue on. He was ready to drop, and knew that if he fell again he'd be unable to get up. He doubted whether Odile and Tall Trees would be able to get him and Meg both to the top of the dune and over to the oasis in such a case. To fail, so close to success. No. He would not fail. Not now. Not when everyone was relying on him. He had to be strong. He had to survive. For their sakes.

Pick it up. Put it down. The monotonous rhythm began again. Pick it up. Put it down. Up, down. Up, down. Updown, updown. Updown. Updownupdownupdown. Willpower; and an almost obsessive need to see the rest of his crew to safety, gave him his strength.

Each moment became an eternity.. Each step became a goal in miniature. *Just one more step before I give up. Just one more.*

Odile's cry of exultation pulled Jim's head up. "Jim! You were right! It's there! The mountain range!"

Tall Trees's voice calm once more, interrupted. "The foothills are ten miles or so from the base of the dune. We just couldn't make them out back there. First they were still below the horizon, then the dunes blocked them. You've done it, Jim. You've brought us out of the desert."

Odile had regained hope and strength. "Yes, Jim. You've led us straight through hell -- and Lord, if those foothills don't look like paradise right now!"

Jim struggled to the crest of the dune with his precious burden. He reached the top. Setting Meg down carefully, he allowed himself the luxury of sinking into the sand for a stolen moment. Safety was there, and it was now but a matter of time.

Ruth and Adomi

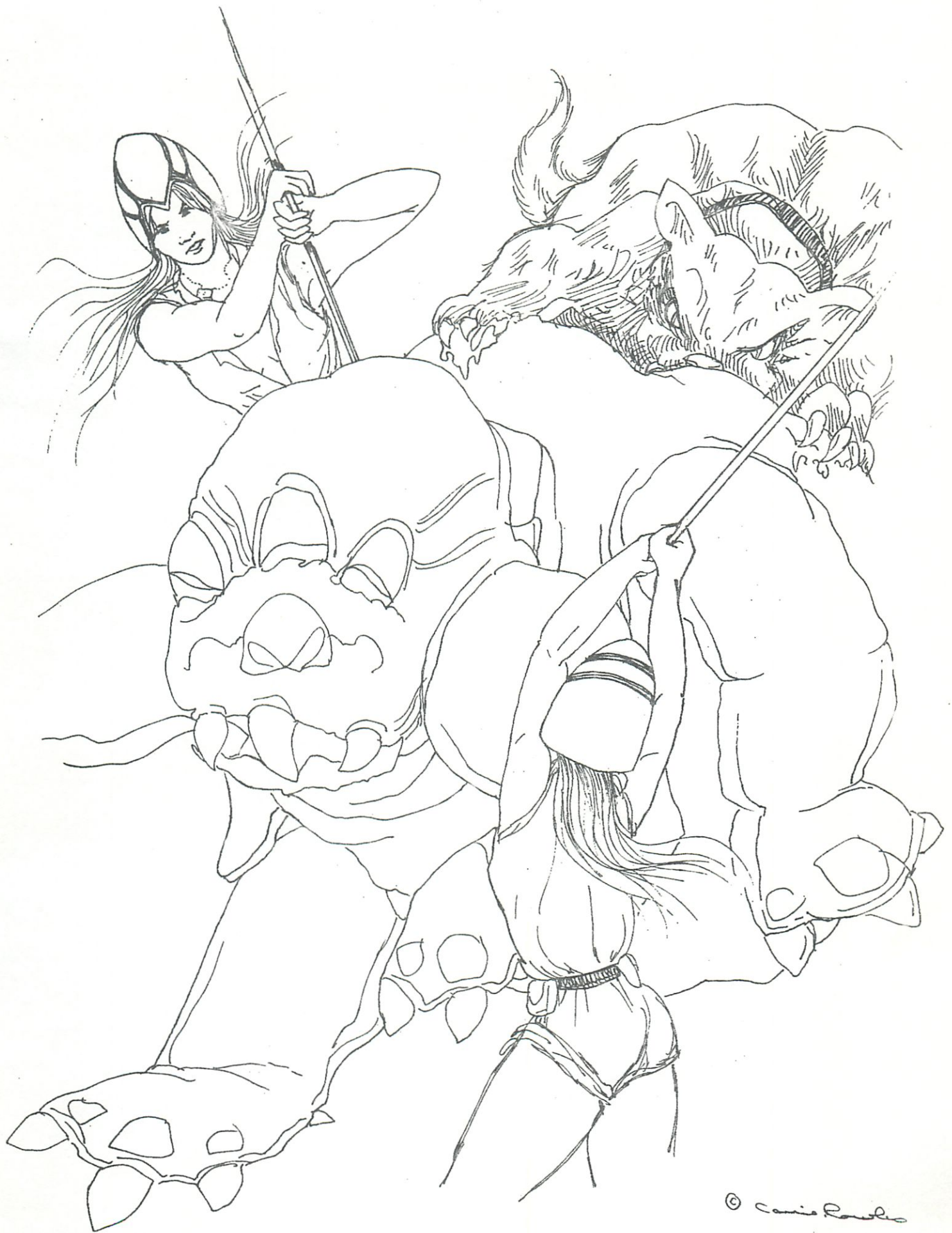
By Carrie A. Rowles



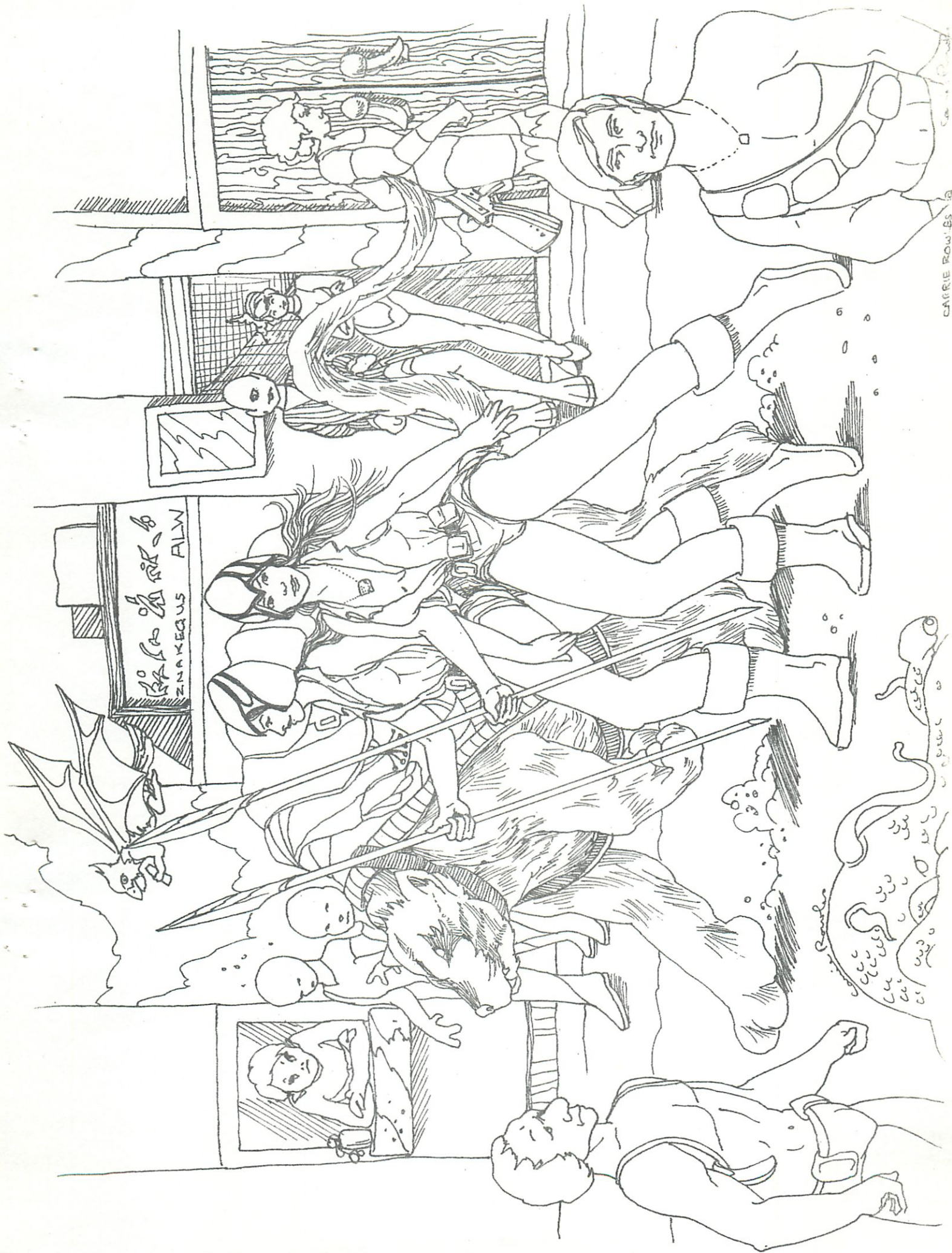


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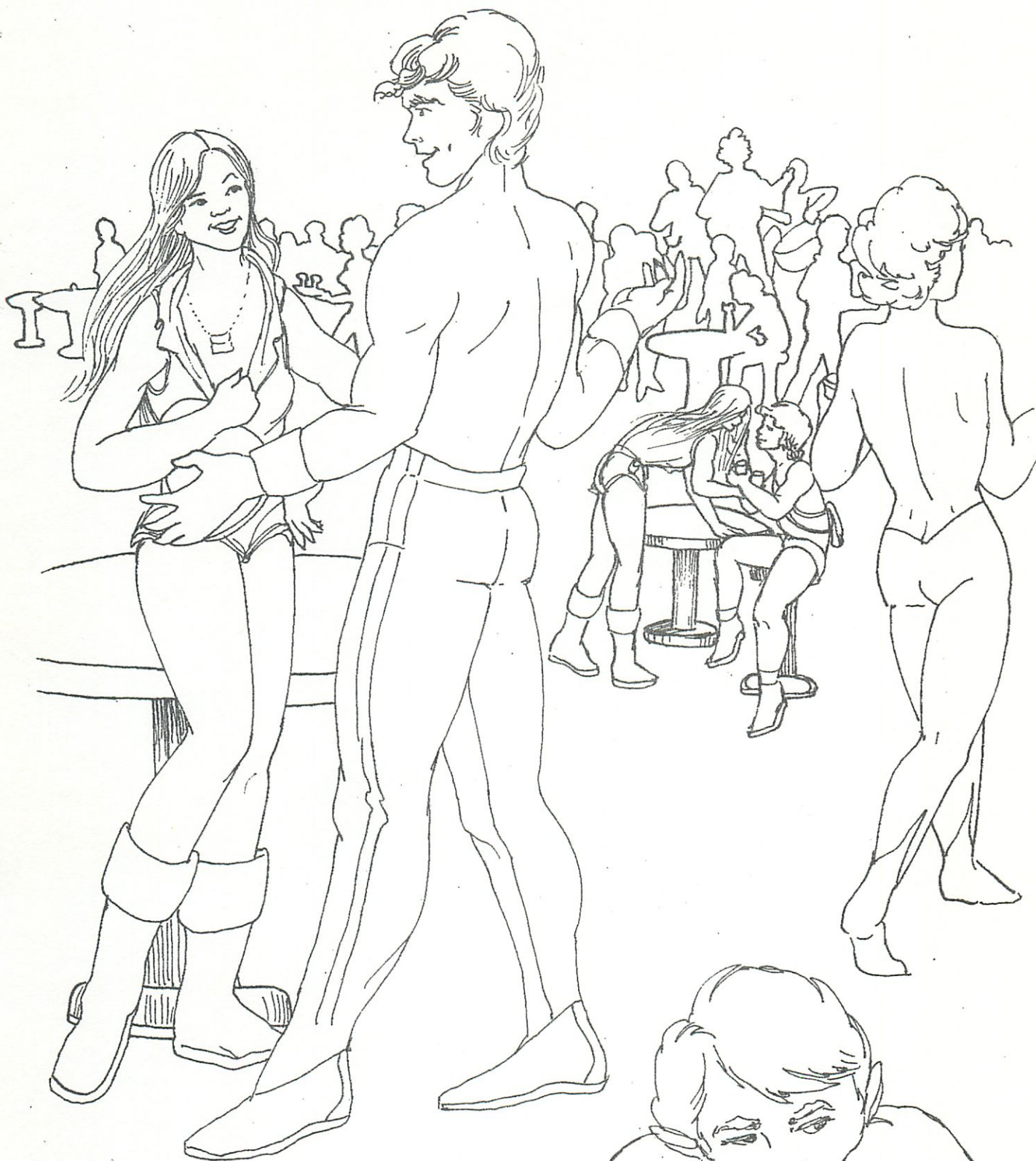






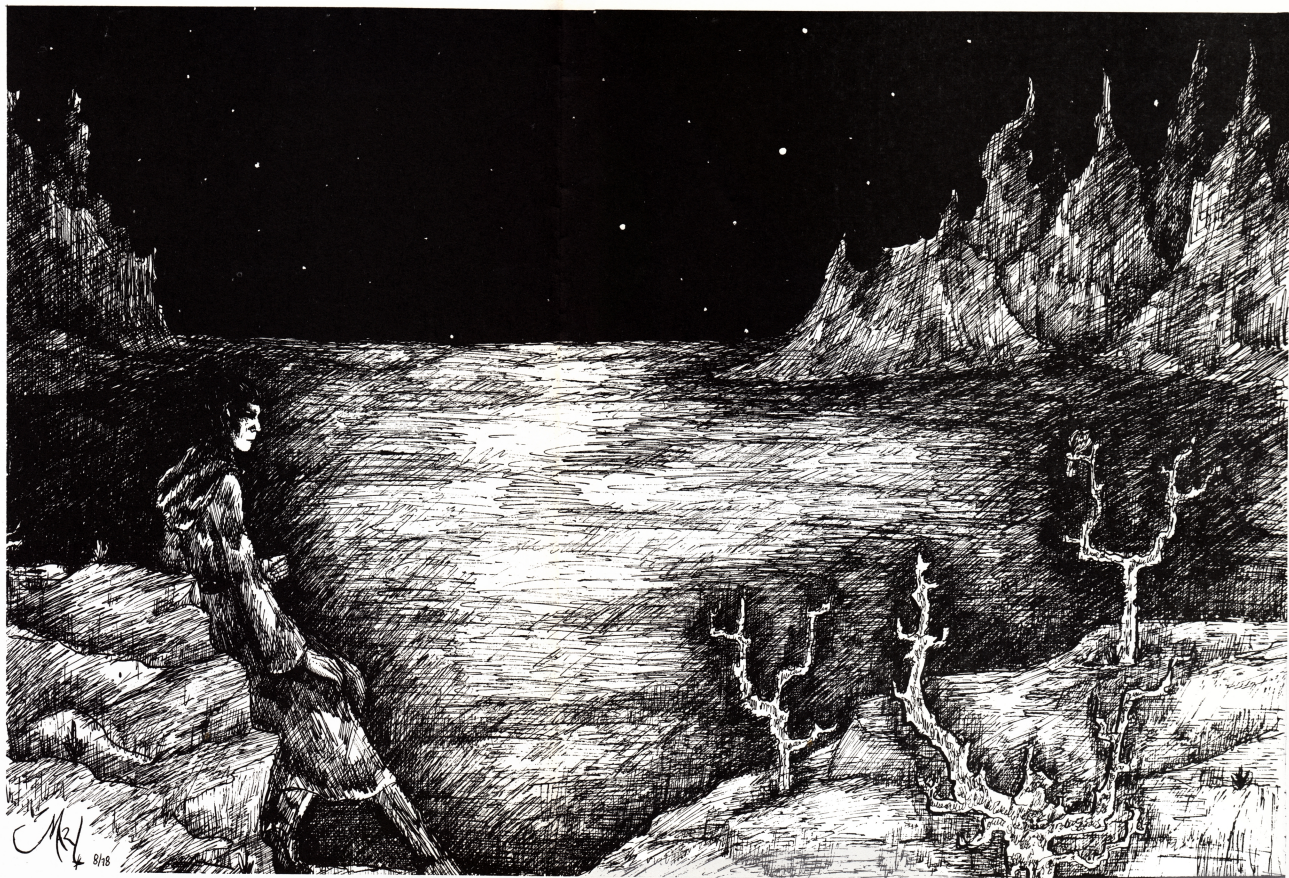


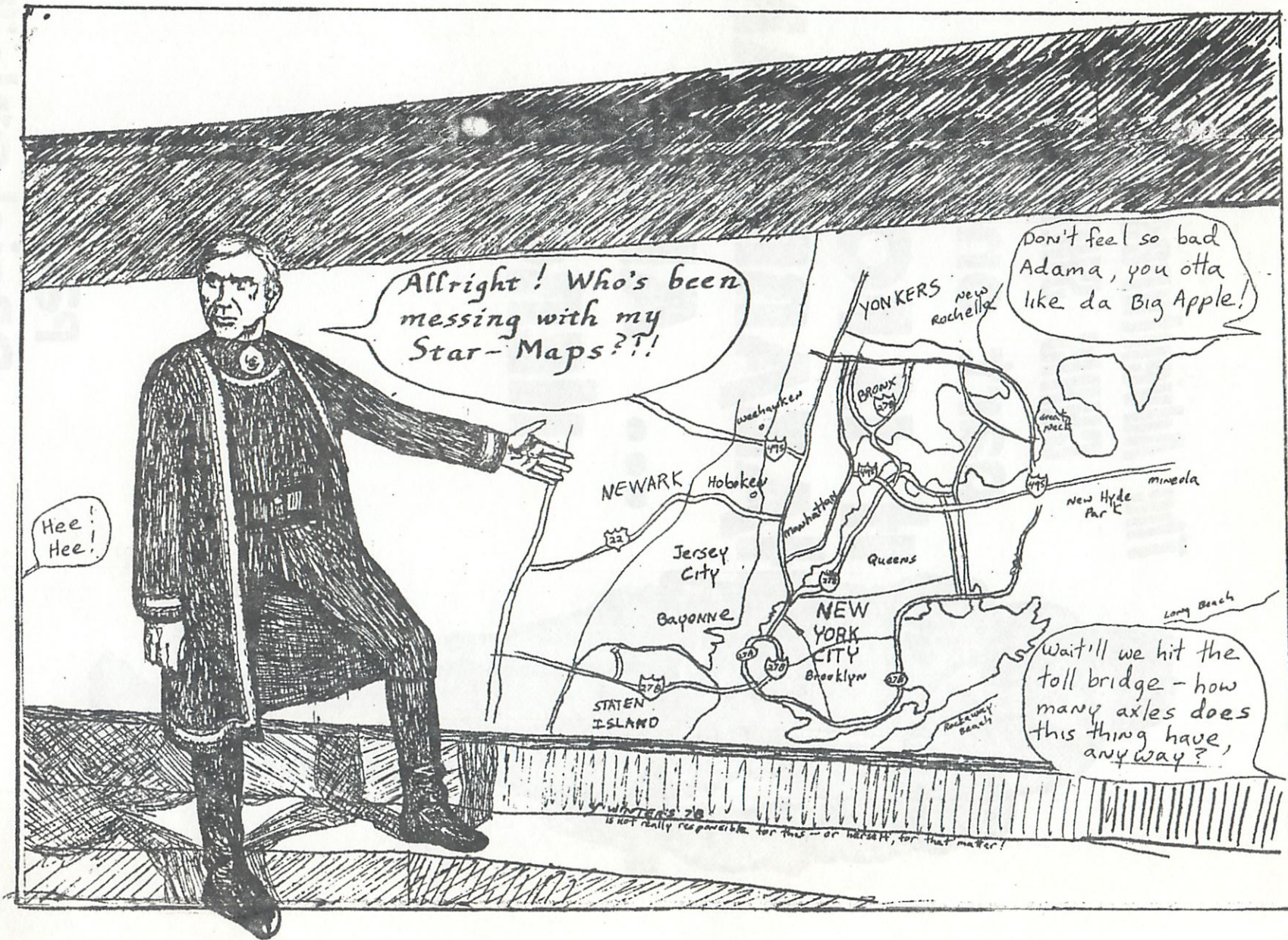
Carrie Rowles



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The Adventures of
CHRIS SHERIDAN

part one:

**IT IS FOR
HAZARDMAN
... AND
HEROIN**

**Patrick
Daniel O'Neill**

CHAPTER 1

The young man stood on the Greenwich Village rooftop, watching the antique shop across the street. He pulled his tight-fitting, dark maroon jacket closed, and zipped it up. The wind off the Hudson tousled his thick black hair. Dusk was just settling in on this mid-October evening.

He pulled his pistol from the holster strapped to his right thigh and checked it over. He thumbed the dial from minimum to maximum, making sure it wouldn't stick. Resetting it at mid-point, he replaced the pistol, but left the holster unsnapped.

From a pocket inside his jacket, he pulled a heavy black mask and tied it around his head. It would never fool anyone who knew him well, but, in general, it was an effective disguise.

Now Chris Sheridan was prepared. All day he had watched this shop. Six times scruffy young men had entered carrying packages and six times they had exited counting money. They didn't fit with the shop's clientele and they *certainly* weren't deliverymen. Chris was pretty sure about what they *were*.

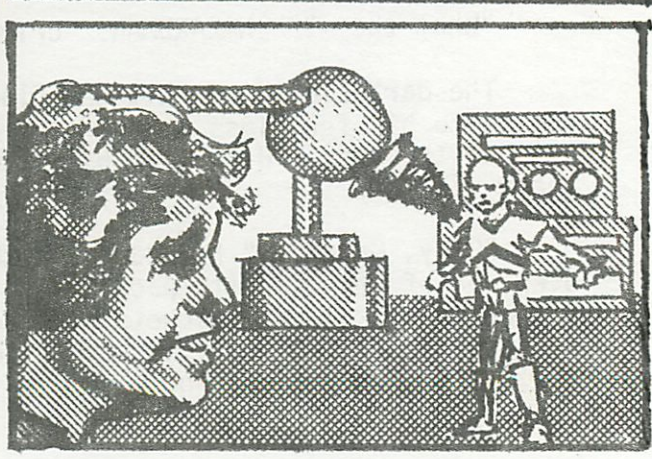
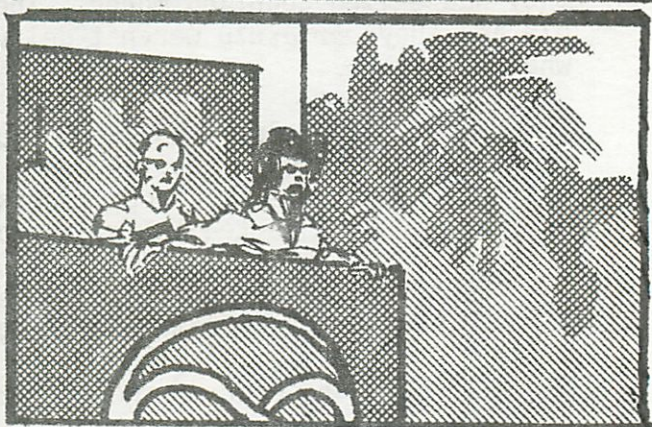
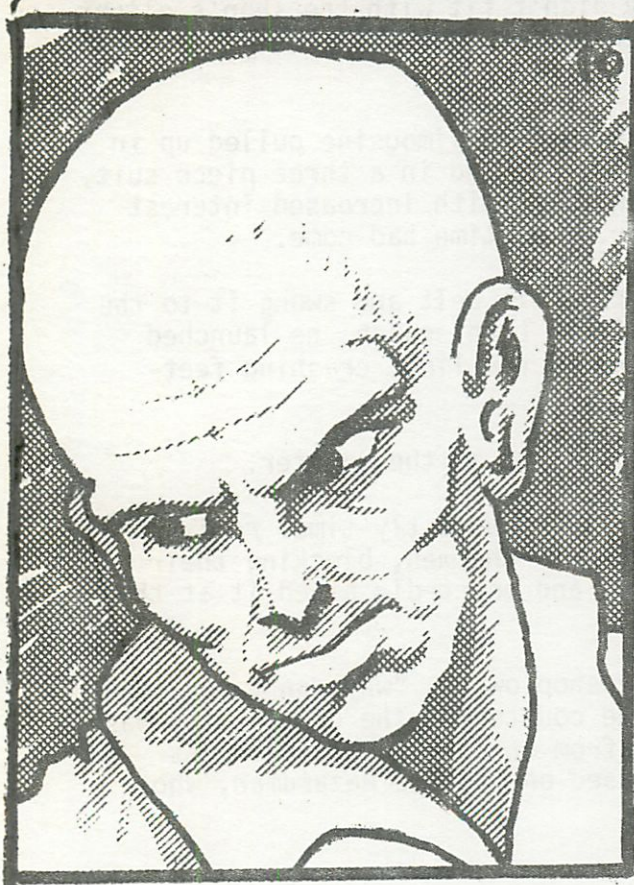
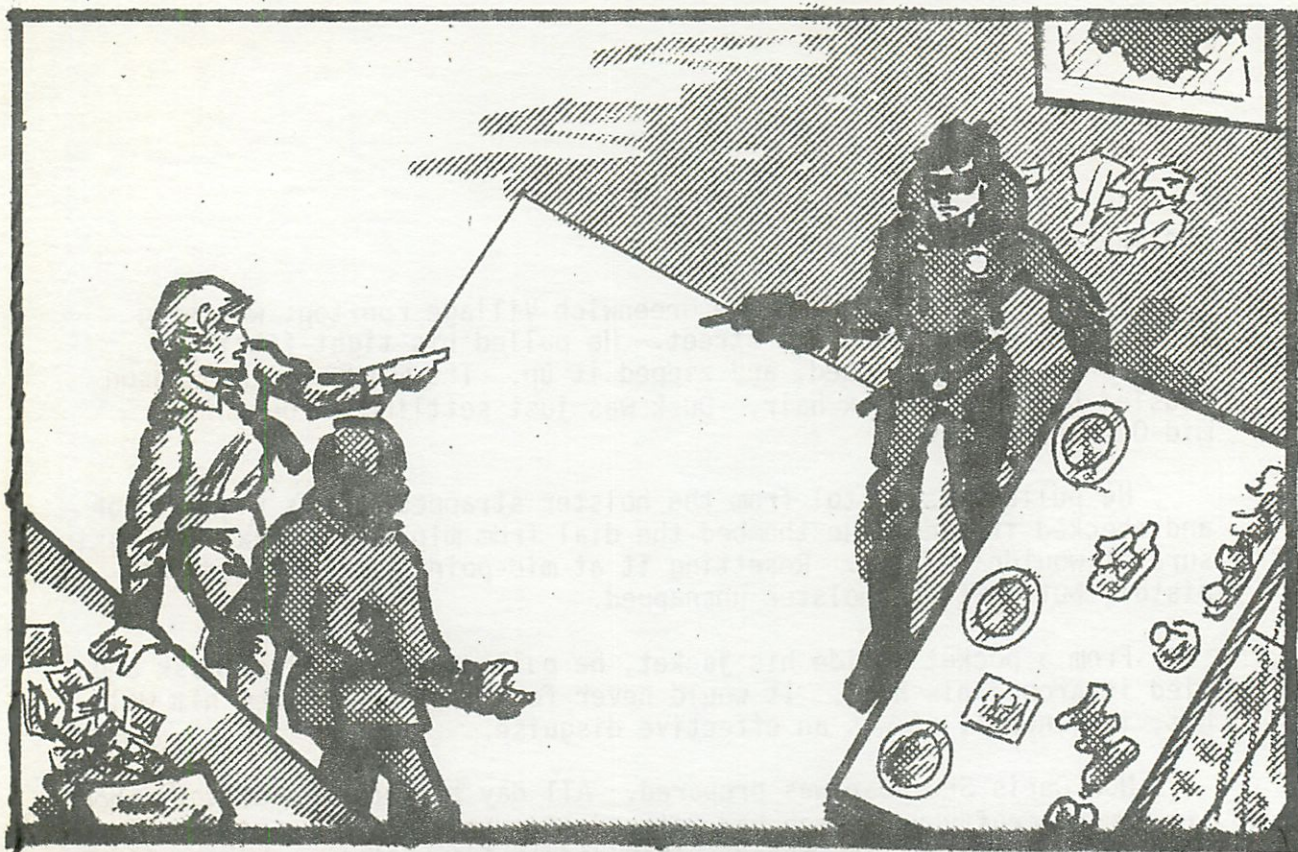
About six o'clock, as night truly fell, a limousine pulled up in front of the antique shop. A beefy man, dressed in a three-piece suit, got out and entered the shop. Chris watched with increased interest as the shopowner locked the glass door. The time had come.

Chris pulled the grappling rope from his belt and swung it to the cornice across the street. Checking for a tight catch, he launched himself into space, swinging on the end of the line, crashing feet-first through the door of the antique shop.

"What the--?" HAZARDMAN!" cried the two at the counter.

The dark-clad youth hit the floor in a perfectly-timed roll, coming to his feet less than two yards from the men, blocking their path to the door. He pulled his pistol and pointedly aimed it at the beefy visitor.

"Okay, Karakis," he addressed the shop owner, "why don't you toss over one of those pretty packets on the counter?" The counter-top was littered with plastic packets, dumped from one of the six packages delivered during the day. Karakis tossed one to the Hazardman, who caught it in his left hand.



Without lowering his gaze from Karakis and his "associate", Chris pulled the packet open with his teeth and carefully tasted the contents, then spit it out. "Heroin, pretty high quality, too." He dumped it on the floor. "You guys have a pretty sweet operation here. Shame I have to end it, isn't it?" He leveled the pistol and --

"Now, Martin!" cried Karakis.

PAIN. THROBBING. LIGHTS. COALESCING INTO...

The face of Tar-myk, as he had appeared that day two years ago when Chris left Crea, home of the beings Chris knew only as the Teachers. Tar-myk, whom Chris called friend and mentor.

Chris stood with him on a balcony overlooking Crea's central garden, as he had two years before. Once again he heard Tar-myk's final words, his farewell:

"Today is the culmination of everything we have planned for you, Christopher."

Chris Sheridan stared out at the enclosed grove, where plants seemed to grow from all angles, even the roof. "Why must I leave, Tar-myk?"

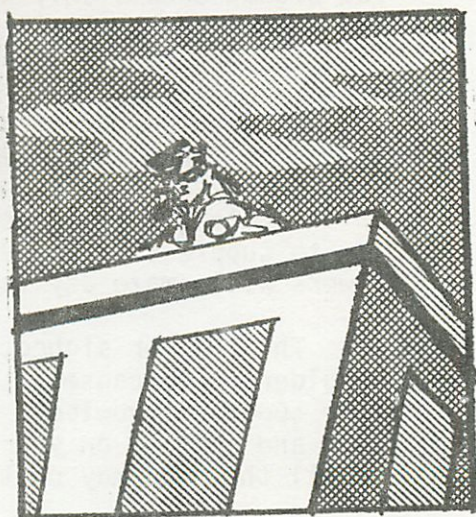
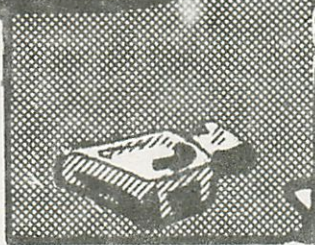
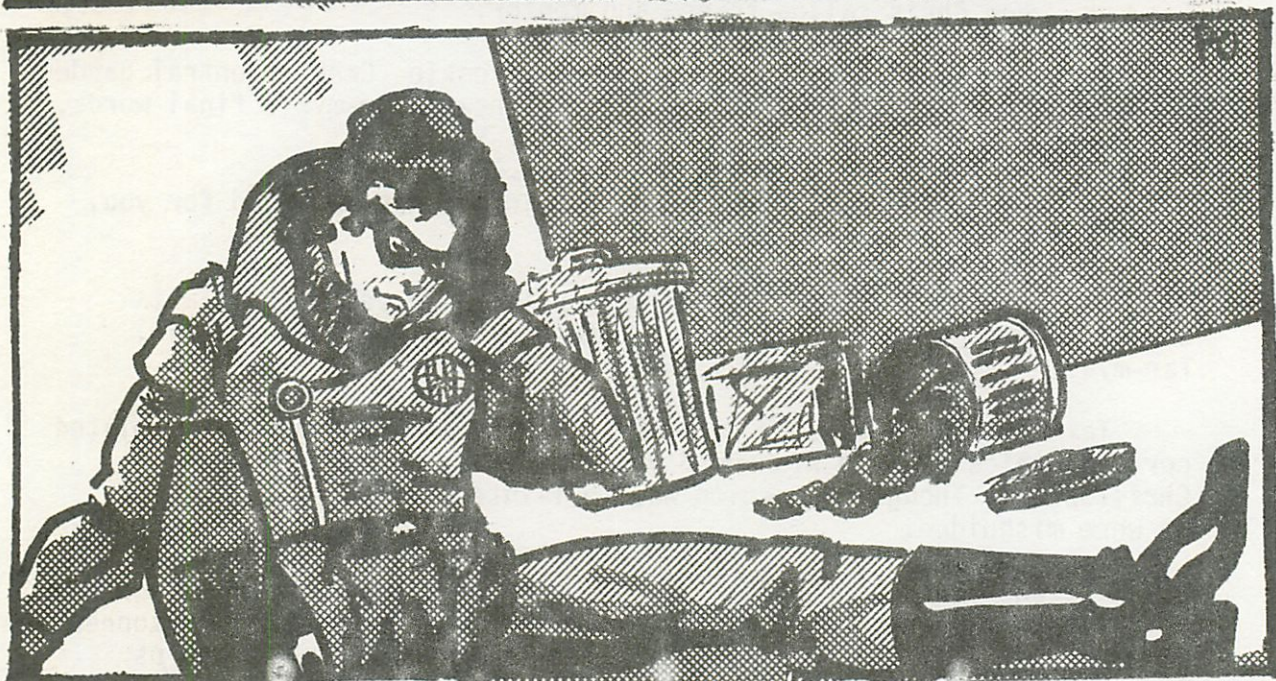
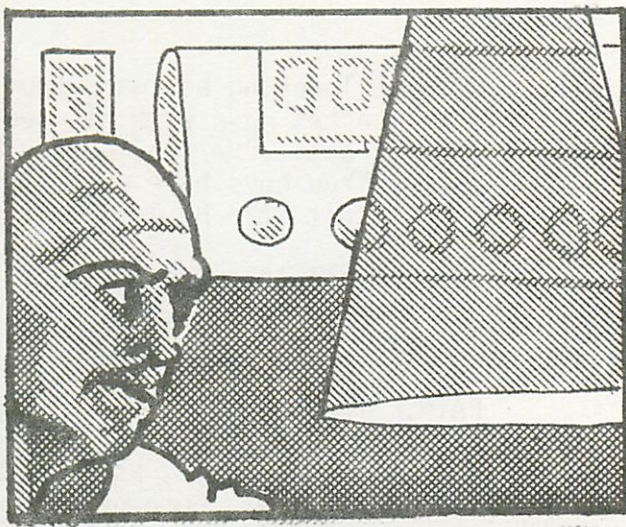
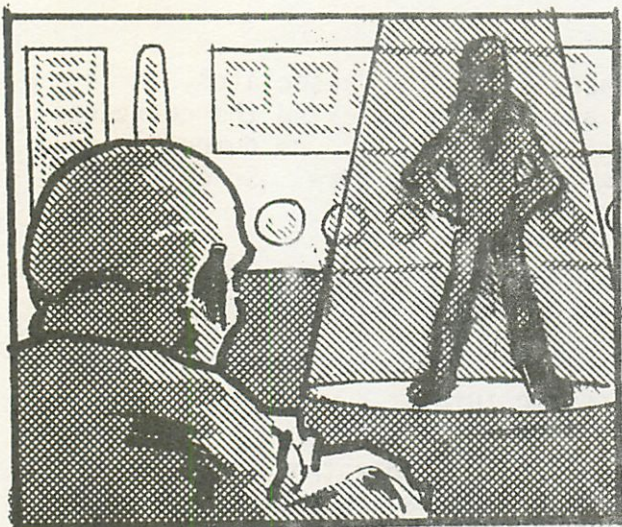
Tar-myk's eyes pleaded with Chris for understanding. "We violated our own ethics when we kidnapped you from Terra so many cycles ago, Christopher. Though our action was well-intended, we know now that we were misguided.

"On one of our periodic study-trips to your home-world, we found your mother, alone, and dying in child-birth. Your birth, Christopher. Knowing that you would die if left unattended, we took you with us. You became Crea's only adopted citizen."

Tar-myk turned toward the austere interior of his laboratory, followed by Chris. "Here, we raised you, trained you. Made you all that a Terran can be. Because of us, whatever are the upper limits of Terran ability, you can achieve them.

"We taught you special mental disciplines and techniques enabling you to suppress pain and control your metabolism. Your recuperative powers will amaze any Terran physician."

The Teacher sighed, and placed his hands on the young Terran's shoulders. "Because of all this, you must return to Terra. By applying your superior knowledge and abilities, you can be a strong force for good and justice on your troubled home-world. We cannot deprive Terra of all that you may contribute."



Chris Sheridan hugged Tar-myk, the closest thing to a father, or mother, he had ever known. They clung to each other briefly, and then Tar-myk pushed him away, toward the teleport station.

"Farewell, Christopher..."

THROBBING. DULL ACHE. DARKNESS...

Tar-myk's face and voice faded into an out-of-focus blur and the pounding of Chris' own pulse. There was a smell of cheap wine and urine. In the distance, he could hear the faint whir of traffic on the F.D.R. Drive. Closer still there was some kind of argument going on. A car honked its horn repeatedly, as if summoning him to consciousness. Chris shook his head to clear it, then stopped. The dizziness told him it wasn't a good idea.

He sat motionless, breathing deeply, regaining control. Even while he lay unconscious, his body had begun its repair cycle. He felt the back of his head -- the lump there was already going down, but a normal man would have a concussion, at least. It would serve as a reminder of his stupidity in not looking for a third occupant in the shop.

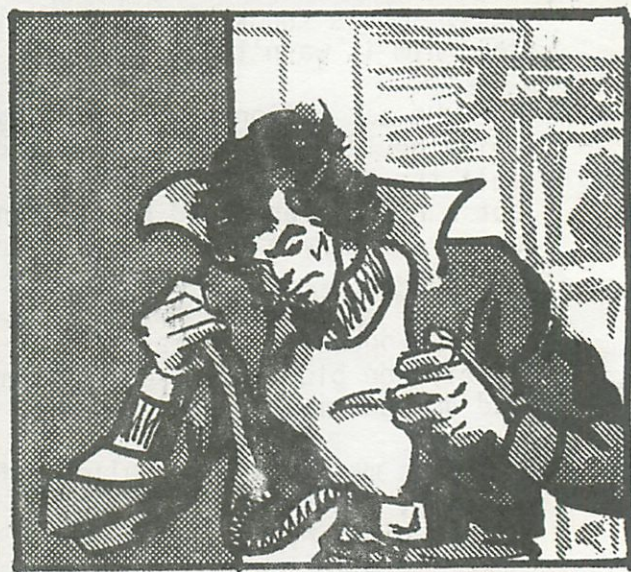
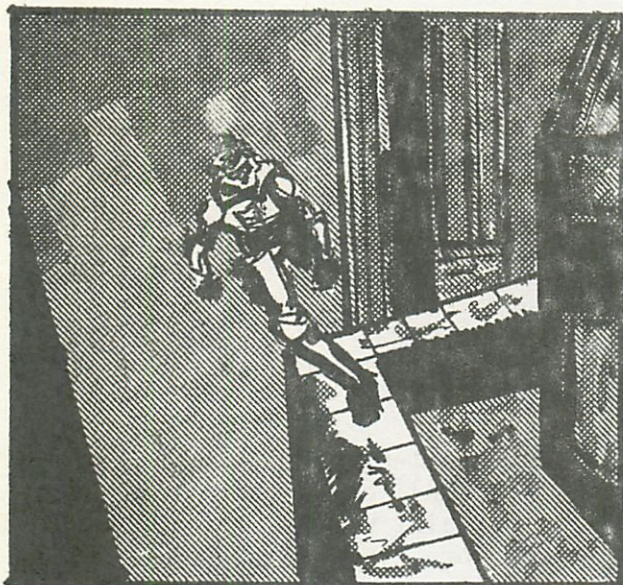
He opened his eyes. He sat in a trash-strewn alley off the Bowery, nearly ten blocks cross-town from the antique shop. Obviously, they had dumped him here while he was out.

His mask had been pulled off his eyes, up onto his forehead. Obviously, they had not recognized him with his artificially blackened hair. With any luck, they would never connect sandy-haired actor Chris Sheridan with the black-haired Hazardman. He checked over the rest of his equipment. The grappling line was still stuffed in his jacket pocket. He replaced it in his belt.

He went to his holster. The pistol -- *the pistol was missing!* He immediately reached to his boot-sheath. Thank the stars! The vibro-blade was still there. But where was the pistol?

Though built with Terran materials, the disruptor pistol was a product of Teacher technology. At its lowest setting, it would make a man lose momentary control of his motor functions. At maximum, it would kill by total disruption of the nervous system, including the involuntary functions.

He *had* to get the pistol back, Chris knew that. His best bet was to trace it from the antique shop. He pulled out the grappling rope and took to the rooftops.



Six minutes later, 9:35 by his watch, the Hazardman stood across the street from the antique shop again. This time he watched the police comb the shop and its environs.

Chris' crash through the door earlier had set off a silent alarm, and the police had answered. "No wonder they were so anxious to dump me," he murmured. He saw a detective leave the shop with a plastic packet -- the one Chris had dropped to the floor.

But where was the pistol? Had the cops already impounded it? Or had it fallen into the hands of Karakis or his beefy associate? Chris rubbed his chin. If the police had it, he could always retrieve it later. If Karakis or the other had it --

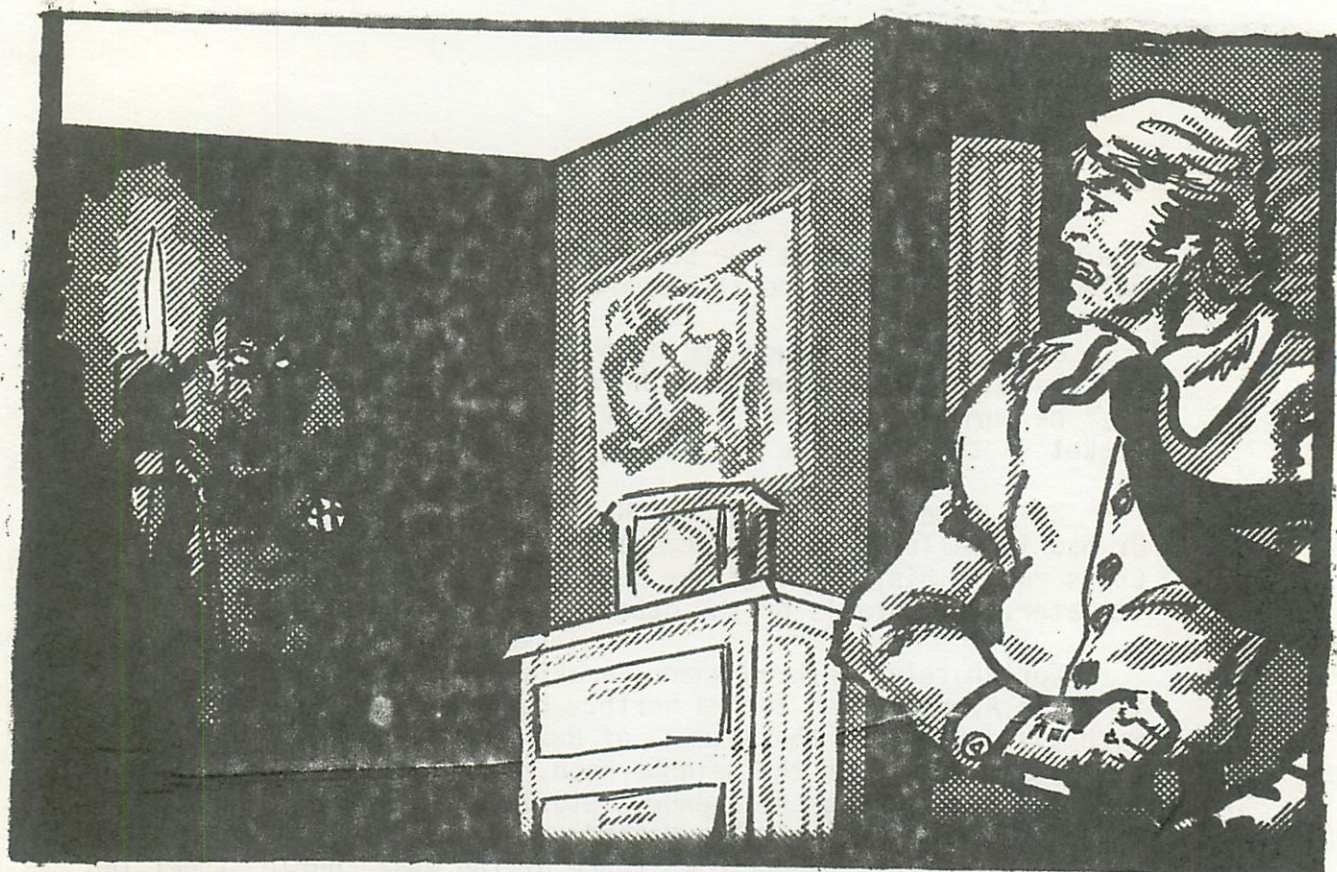
Fortunately, he knew where Karakis lived. He worked his way east to Sixth Avenue, then turned north. Below him, the nightlife of Greenwich Village, still the Bohemia of New York, went on. On this Thursday night, shoppers from the neighborhood, and from all over the city, were still strolling the avenue. Stores were open late on Thursdays, and business was brisk. The Hazardman dropped quietly to the street level in front of the north entrance of the West Fourth Street IND Station, at Eighth Street.

After eight p.m., this end was nearly always deserted, unlike the south entrance at West Third. Even the shoeshine stand at the top of the steps, in front of the bank, was unattended. Still, the Hazardman moved cautiously, preferring not to be seen. Avoiding the token booth, he went directly to a bank of lockers and opened number 273. He pulled out the athletic bag inside. Pulling off his jacket, mask, and gun-belt, he stuffed them inside the bag. He pulled his trousers out of his boots.

Now, dressed casually in a light blue turtleneck and black pants, Chris Sheridan dropped a token in the slot and went down to the platform to catch the uptown "D" train.

CHAPTER 2

Daedalus Karakis, dealer in antiques and other more "exotic" goods, was pleased this night. Despite the unexpected intrusion by the masked vigilante, the exchange had gone well. With over one hundred thousand dollars in his wallet, he had eaten an expensive dinner at "21" and now, at 11:20 p.m., he was entering his apartment building on the fashionable Upper East Side.



He greeted the doorman jauntily. He had no fear about keeping the large sum in his apartment overnight. The building had excellent security: a doorman twenty-four hours a day, constant TV surveillance of the entrances and hallways.

The elevator trip was swift. Getting off at the sixteenth floor, he strolled casually to his door. He stepped inside and stopped short.

In the dark of the apartment, the light from his heavily-barred window caught his eye. The startling thing about it was that the bars had apparently been roughly cut -- as though by an incredible knife.

Without turning on the light, Karakis scanned the apartment. It seemed to be empty. He took another step in. "Who's here?" Silence. "How could anyone have gotten to a sixteenth-floor window?" He turned his back to the window.

SNIK! HUMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!

He whirled at the sound. There, in the far corner, in the blackest part of the apartment, was a shimmering glow. It took the form of a knife-blade. It reflected off the masked eyes of its wielder. "Good evening, Daedalus. Enjoy your dinner?" asked the Hazardman.

Karakis quivered in fear, but still managed to make his voice a snarl. "You're too late, masked man! Garvey has the horse, now."

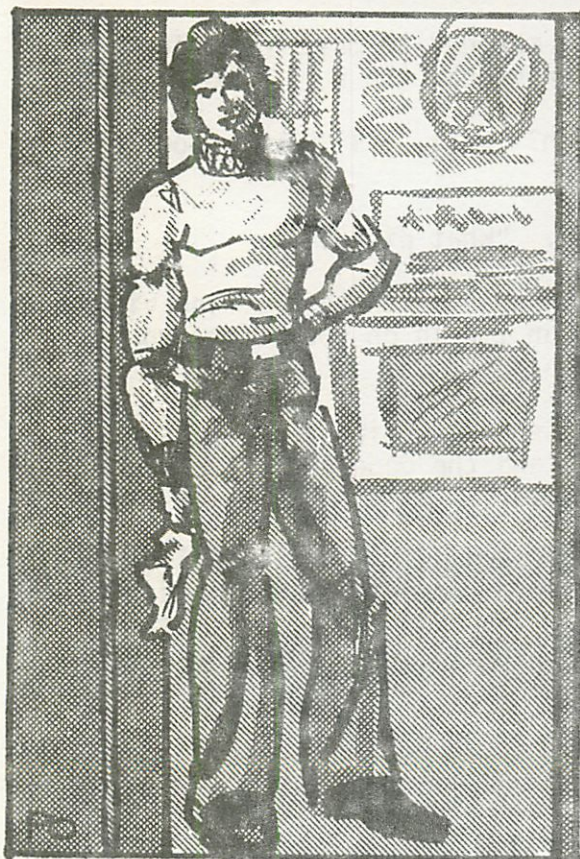
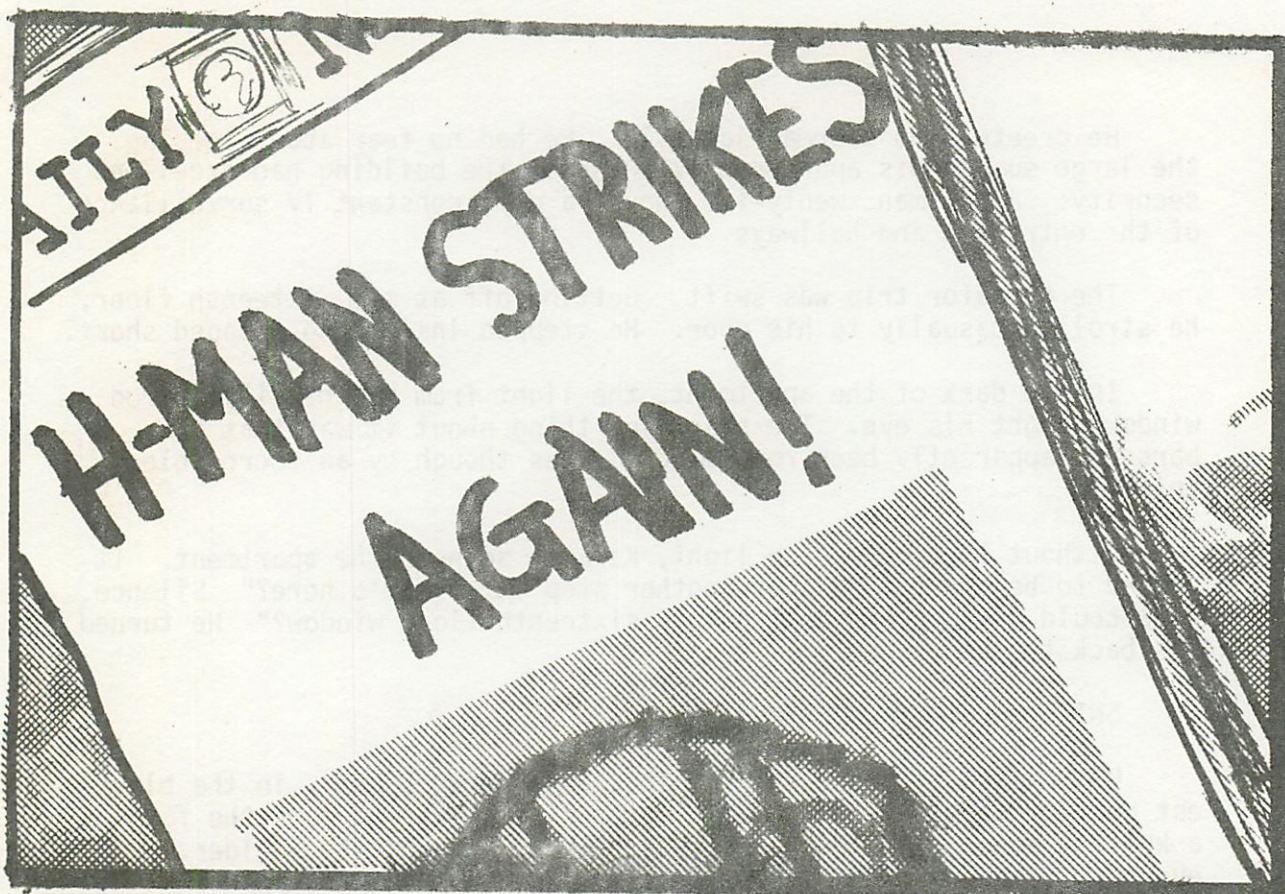
"Garvey. So that's Fatso's name, eh? Well, I'll worry about him later. Where's my pistol?"

Karakis lost the snarl in his voice. "What pistol?"

The Hazardman stepped forward and brandished the glimmering vibro-blade in the smaller man's face. "The gun I held on you before your shop clerk bonked me on the back of the head!"

Karakis swallowed hard and eyed the strange knife before answering, "I dunno. We were in a hurry to get you and the dope out of there before the cops showed. Maybe Garvey picked it up."

"Where's Garvey live?" growled the Hazardman. Karakis swallowed again and began shaking, but stayed silent. The Hazardman picked him up and held him at eye level, keeping the vibro-blade in the smaller man's view. "You saw what this can do to steel bars -- would you like to see what it does to human flesh?"



Karakis went limp at the prospect. "He's got a big house up in Mount Vernon, just over the Bronx line -- you couldn't miss it." The Hazardman dropped him to the floor in a heap. He pulled a length of rope from his belt and tied Karakis up. Then the vigilante picked up the phone and dialed the local precinct.

"This is the Hazardman. I think you boys will find something interesting at Apartment 16D of 250 East 73rd Street." He hung up the phone.

Karakis sat gibbering against the wall as the Hazardman approached him, vibro-blade glowing and humming ominously.

CHAPTER 3

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, Friday, October 13, 1978:
"Police in the Metro North Command received a 'gift' last night on the Upper East Side. Summoned by a phone call to an apartment on East 73rd Street, the cops found suspected drug dealer Daedalus Karakis, bound and gagged in his own home.

"Karakis babbled about being attacked by a masked man. Police found a familiar emblem carved into the wall behind him -- an encircled 'H' superimposed on an infinity symbol -- the sign of the vigilante called the Hazardman."

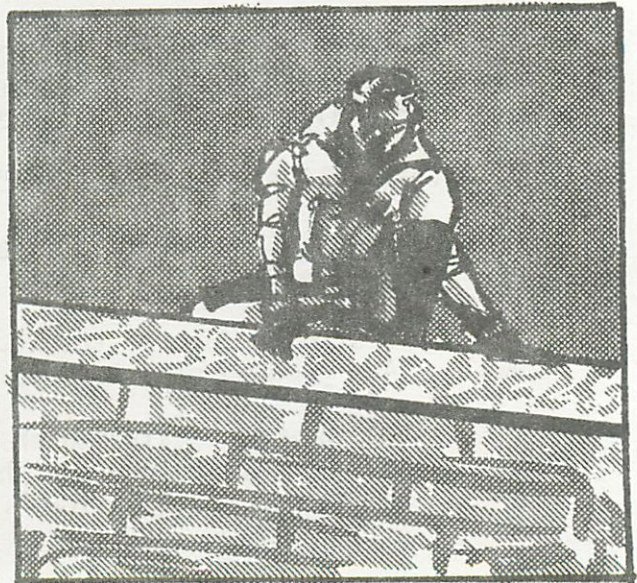
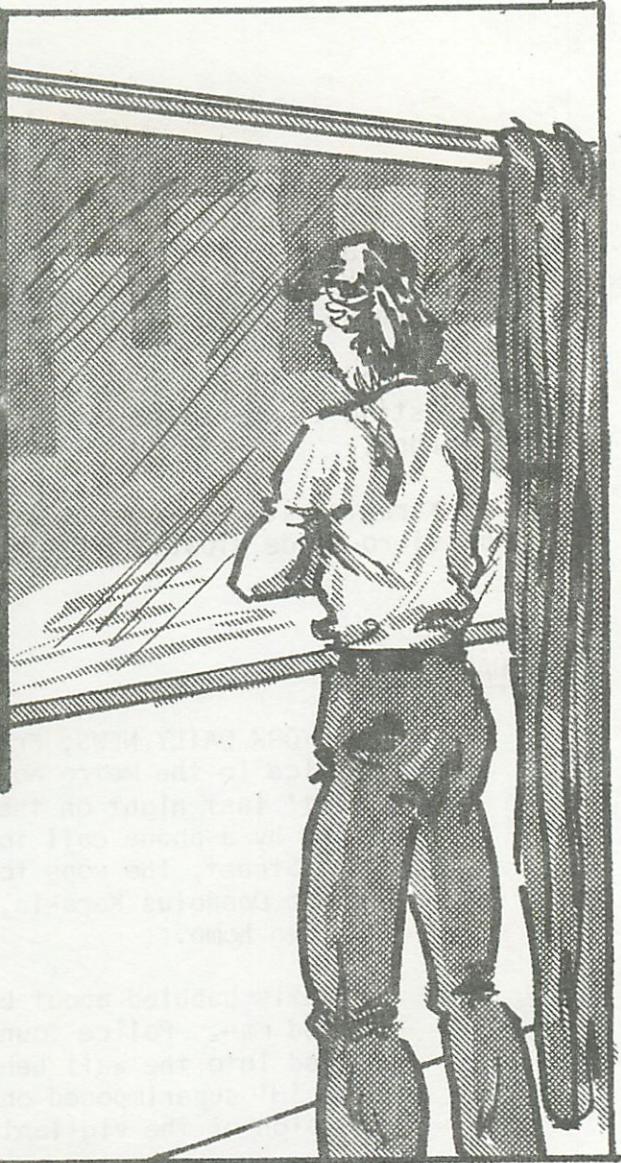
Caroline McAllister crumpled the paper in disgust. *Damn! He's going to get himself in big trouble soon*, she thought. She stamped across her living room, opened the door, and went to the apartment across the hall. Knocking, she called, "Chris, you up?"

"Yeah. It's open, c'mon in."

She stepped in and stood, feet apart, arms akimbo, face glowering, just inside the doorway. "I hope you're satisfied, Christopher Sheridan!"

Chris strolled out of the kitchen, wiping his hands on a paper towel. "And good morning to you, too, Caroline," he grinned.

The young woman stalked over to the couch and plopped herself down. "Don't try to charm me with your 'disarming smile', either, Chris. I just saw your 'notices'."



Chris leaned in the doorway. "So have I. Listen, just because you stumbled onto my other life as it were, doesn't mean you're my guardian angel, or conscience, or whatever."

"No, but I *am* your friend." Her face softened. "Chris -- the police have a warrant out for the Hazardman."

"What charges?"

Caroline gestured in false nonchalance. "Oh, nothing serious. Assault with a deadly weapon, breaking and entering, destruction of private property."

Chris grinned again. "That seems about right." Caroline glared at him. He turned serious. "I'm sorry. You're right. But I've got a more important problem right now." He moved to the window.

"What problem?" she asked, joining him.

Chris Sheridan stood at the window, looking over the docks of Brooklyn, across the East River to Manhattan. "Look over there, Caroline. Millions of people -- and somewhere in that mass of flesh, stone, and steel is a deadly weapon -- my disruptor pistol."

"WHAT? How, when --"

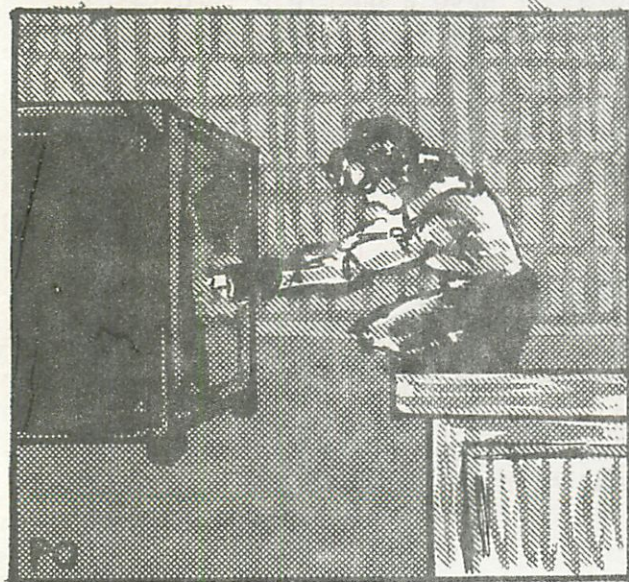
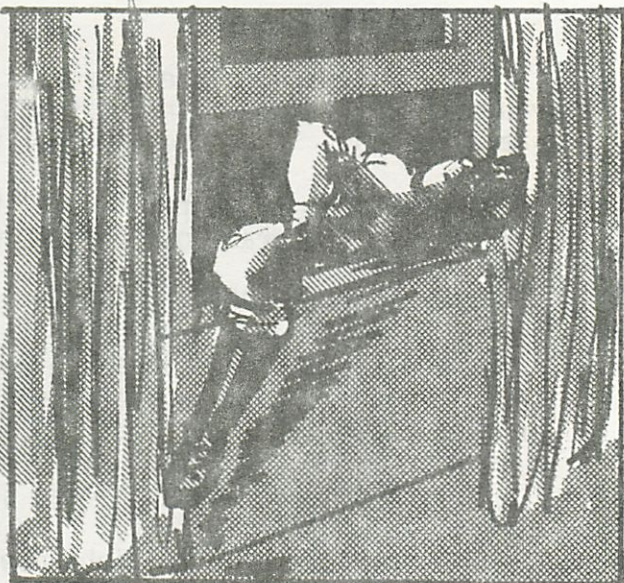
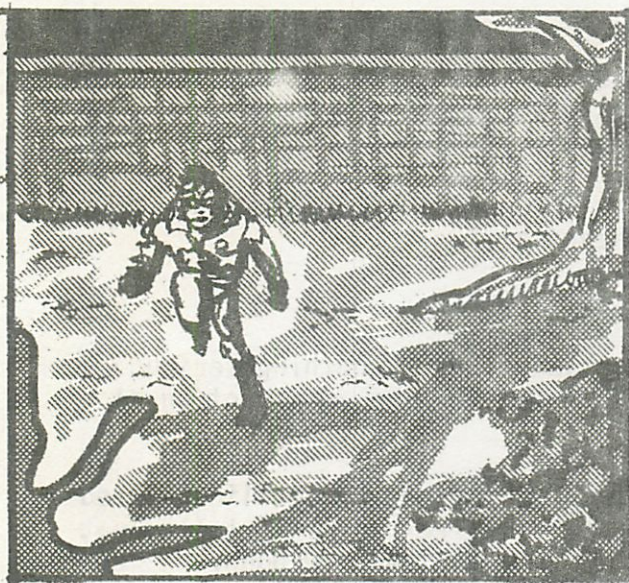
He slumped into a chair. "Last night, at the antique shop. Why do you think I had to tie Karakis up? With the pistol I could have just stunned him 'til the police came."

Caroline frowned, remembering the harsh way she had confronted him. He was obviously sincere about the danger of the pistol in the wrong hands. "Do you know where it is?" she asked.

He shook his head. "Not for sure. I have a possible lead -- Karakis' business associate, somebody named Garvey. He stood up and went to the closet. "Let's go get some lunch."

Pulling on the jacket, he said, "Wanna give me a lift to Mount Vernon tonight?"

The night of October 13, a Friday, was dark and moonless. A threatening cloud cover had moved in during the late afternoon, and now it totally obscured what would have been a nearly full moon. At 7:30 p.m., a blue VW Rabbit pulled into a dark, backwoods road in Mount Vernon. The girl at the wheel pulled in close to the seven-foot stone wall on the right-hand side. She turned to her companion. "You sure this is the best way to handle this, Chris?"



Chris continued checking over his equipment. "Can't think of anything else. At the least, even if Garvey doesn't have the pistol, he's sure to have some drugs in there. It won't be a total wild goose chase." He pulled the vibro-blade from its sheath and pushed the button. It responded with a reassuring glow and hum. Replacing it, he continued, "If I'm not out in ninety minutes, call the police." He tied on his mask, got out of the car, and walked to the wall.

"Chris?"

"Yes, Caroline?" He leaned to her window, his six-foot two frame bent double.

"Be careful." He grinned, took her face in his gloved hands, and gently kissed her. She responded by grasping him firmly around the shoulders and kissing him full-force. Finally, she broke contact and pushed him away, saying, "Go now. Before I do something stupid."

He laughed quietly. Moving a little behind the car, he jumped, easily landing atop the wall. She watched silently as he scanned the grounds, then choked back a farewell as he disappeared on the other side of the wall.

The Hazardman ran at full-speed across the lawn, bent low, posing as small a target as possible. He zig-zagged from cover to cover, just in case. When he reached the house, he stopped, pressing his back tight against the wall. A raindrop struck him in the face. "Shit," he hissed. "Just what I didn't need."

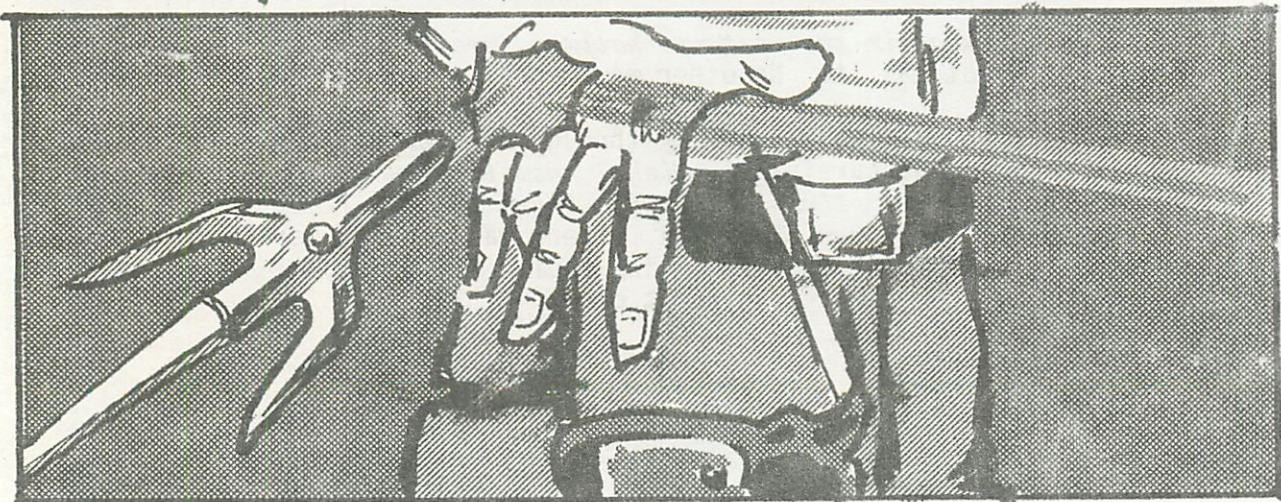
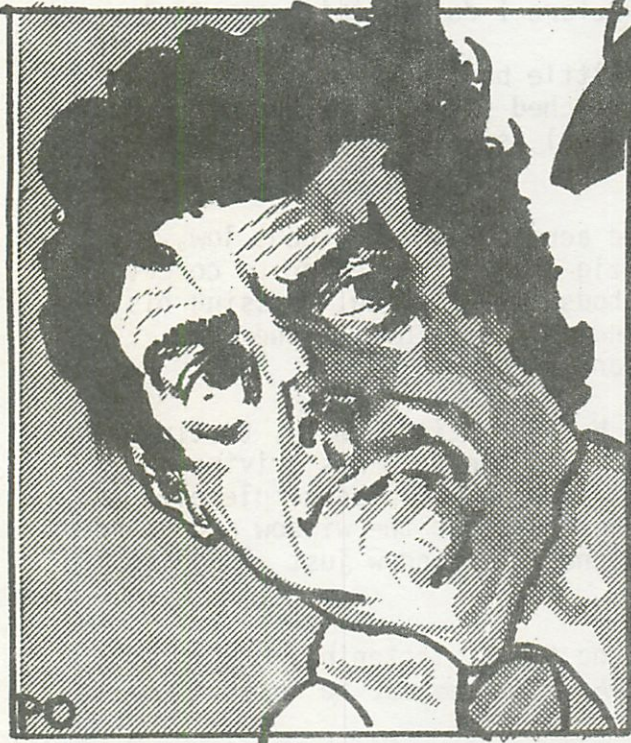
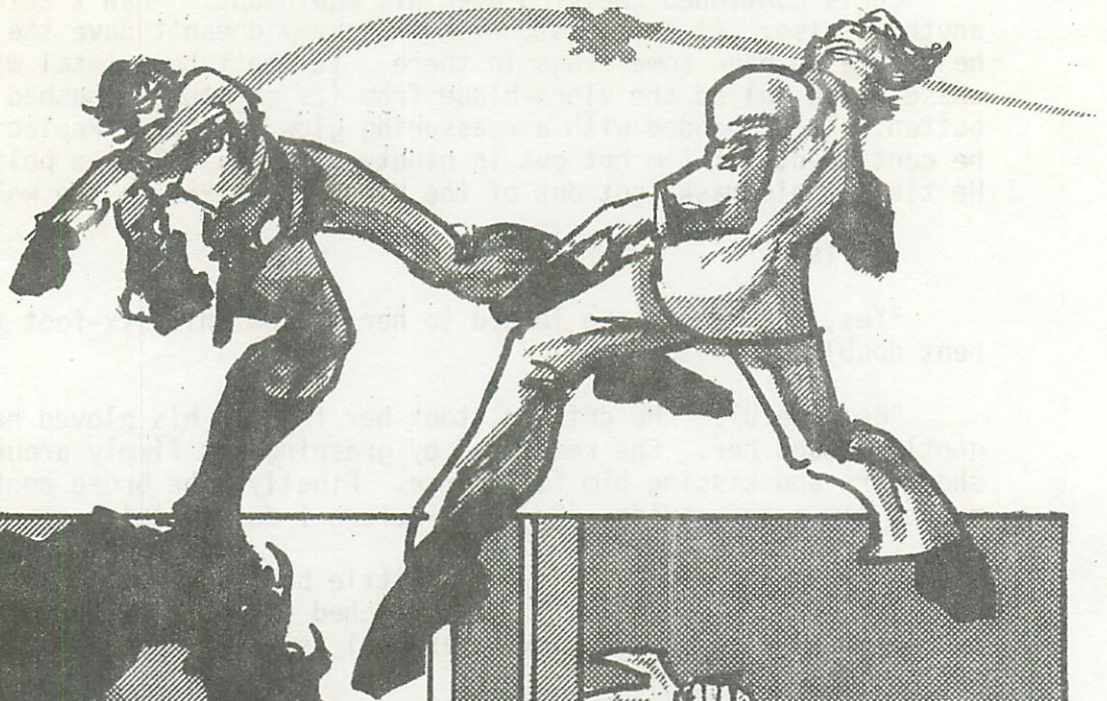
He edged his way to a window. He pushed it lightly, testing. It was locked. He had to get in quickly, the wind was driving the rain into his back. In a very short time he would be completely drenched. He exerted his full strength against the window and heard a "CLUNK". The lock broke and he opened the window just enough to crawl through.

Once in, he sat motionless on the floor, listening. *Soft, little footsteps in a small room at the back of the house, he noted. The maid, in her own room.*

Heavy trudge in the upstairs hallway, pretty regular. A guard, probably. That was it. No other movement.

He got up, and walked softly through the lower floor, his sensitive eyes scanning carefully. *Wish I knew the layout of this place better, he thought. I've got no idea where he might keep something like my pistol, or even the drugs. There was a heavy oak door just ahead of him, leading off the living room. A study, probably. Better check it out. He slowly pushed it open.*

CREEEAAKKKK.



He froze. *Damn! You'd think in a house like this they'd oil hinges.* After three minutes there was no apparent reaction to the sound. He entered the room.

It was indeed a study, or an office. The room was booklined, richly paneled in dark wood, dominated by a heavy, decidedly masculine desk. Behind it, and slightly to the left, was a massive floor safe. The Hazardman moved toward it.

Kneeling, he spun the lock. *Complicated tumbler system,* he thought. *Take way too long to crack it.* He glanced at his watch. It was 8:05. He had more than an hour before Caroline called the police. He pulled out the vibro-blade and turned it on. Holding it in two hands, he applied it to the safe, watching as the blade's powerful energies tore through the steel.

THUD.

The Hazardman whirled, tossing the knife at the same time. It went through the shoulder of the first guard's jacket, just as he entered the room, and pinned him to the door.

The second guard pushed past his companion and charged into the room. The Hazardman vaulted over the desk and slammed his feet into the intruder's chest. They went down in a heap, the Hazardman on top. He slugged the guard and leaped to his feet.

The first guard, having struggled out of his jacket, threw a powerful roundhouse at the masked man. The Hazardman easily ducked, bringing his own fist upward into the guard's gut. He doubled over in pain and the Hazardman pushed past him into the living room, planning to make his exit with all deliberate speed.

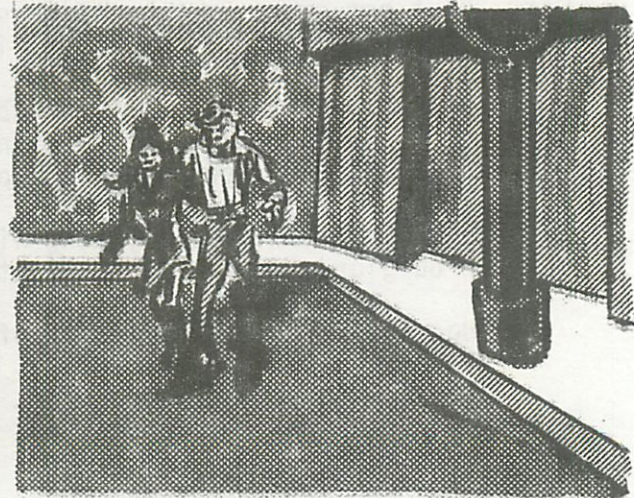
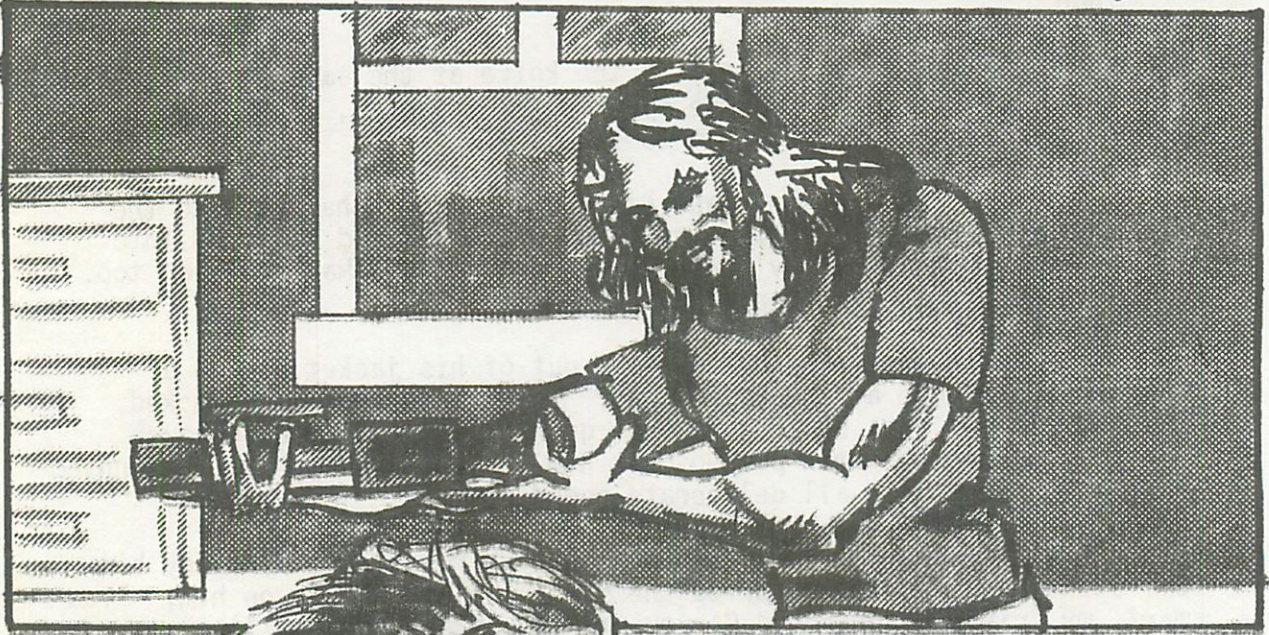
"Hold it right there, Hazardman." He whirled to find Garvey himself standing beside the door to the study, holding a .38 on him. "You're smart, my friend," continued Garvey, making "friend" sound like a curse-word, "but not smart enough. Did you really think I'd keep anything as dangerous or valuable as heroin in that safe?"

Actually, Chris hadn't. He'd been hoping to find business records or something like that. But he didn't intend to tell Garvey that. "So, I'm naive. What do you intend to do with me?"

"I don't have to do anything with you -- to the police you're just another burglar...with a sophisticated set of tools.

"Harris, bring me that knife of his."

Harris, the second guard, went to the heavy oak door and tugged on the knife. "It won't come out, Mr. Garvey!" He tugged again, harder. Still nothing.



"Jonas, help him." The other guard lent his muscle to the task. The Hazardman couldn't help himself -- he chuckled. "What's so funny, masked man?" asked Garvey.

Catching his breath, the Hazardman grinned. "Maybe they should eat their Wheaties."

Garvey grumbled. "Okay, wise guy, you get it out. Watch him, boys." With the gun at his back, and a guard on each side, the Hazardman approached the door. He grasped the vibro-blade's hilt, carefully placing his thumb over the button. Once activated, it slid out of the wood easily. Then, with a gesture of nonchalacce, he tossed it over his shoulder, accurately knocking the .38 from Garvey's hand.

The Hazardman grabbed the two startled guards by the scruff of the neck and crashed their heads together. They would be out for hours... Then he literally leaped across the room, beating Garvey to the gun. Now he held it on the drug dealer. "Okay, Garvey, suppose you show me where you do keep the drugs?"

Thirty minutes later, the Hazardman reappeared on the stone wall next to Caroline's Rabbit. "Chris, you okay?" He dropped to the side of the car. "Yeah, fine. Get on your CB and get the cops, okay? Tell them they've got a package to pick up here."

She glanced at his gun-belt. The holster was still empty. "He didn't have the pistol, huh?"

"Nope. I'm running out of places to look."

CHAPTER 4

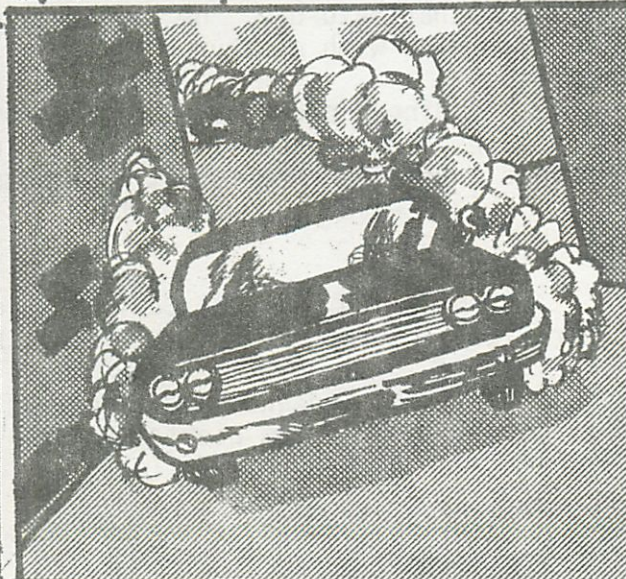
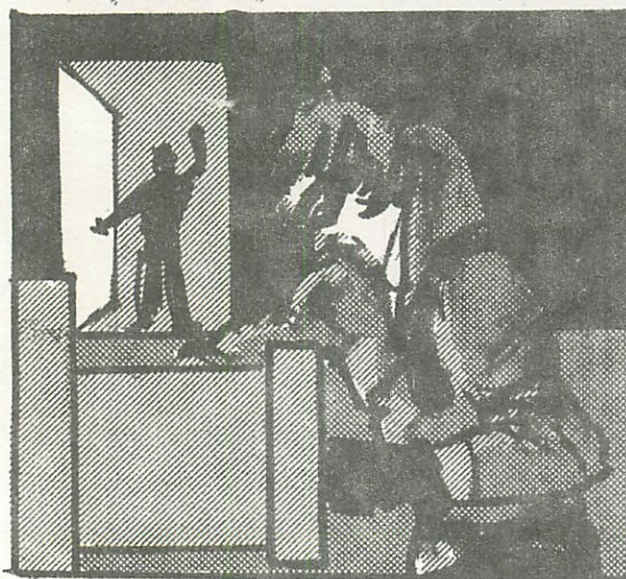
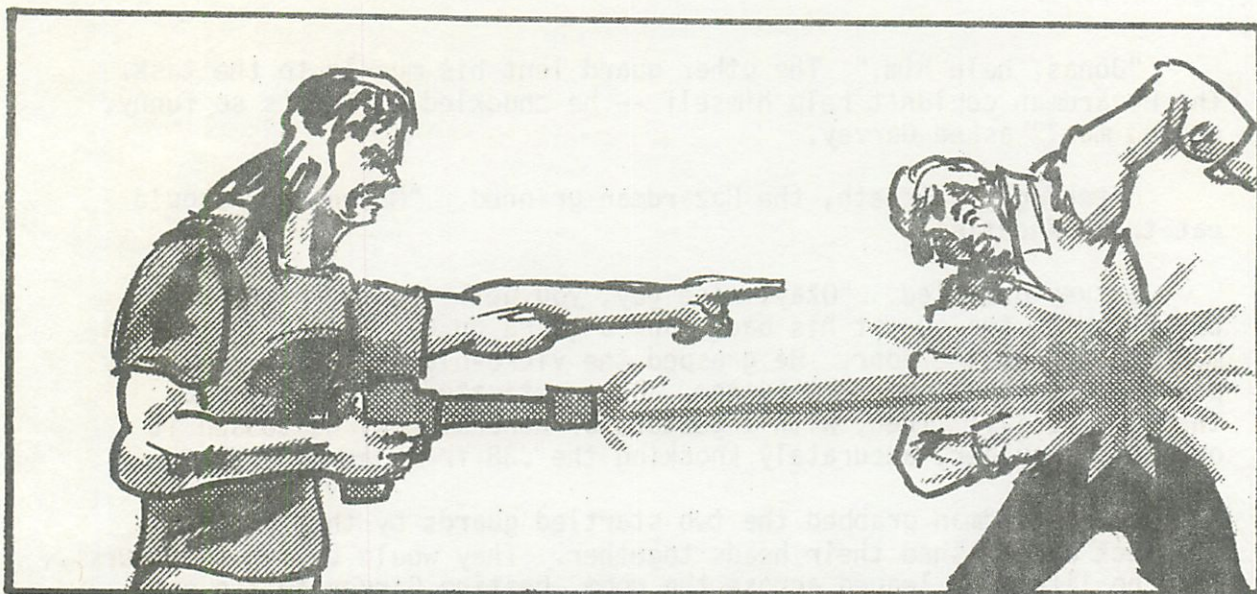
Jonathan Martin bounced cheerily into his apartment in the East Village that Saturday. He had finally thought of a use for the "prize" he'd come up with on Thursday night.

His dingy, one-room place was covered with old newspapers and magazines. He pushed aside one pile and uncovered a strongbox. He pulled a key from his pocket and opened it. Reaching in, he removed his "prize" -- an unusual pistol.

In Brooklyn Heights, Chris Sheridan and Caroline McAllister strolled along Cadman Plaza. "Where now?" she asked.

Chris stopped and leaned against a lamp post. "I'm going to have an 'appointment' with Lieutenant Crosby at Midtown South tonight. Maybe it's in the Property Office."

Caroline frowned. "I know Crosby's helped in the past, but can he do that much?"



"Maybe not, but he's the only police contact I've got."

6:45. It was evening now. Most of the stores in the city were closing up. At the supermarket at Second Avenue and East First Street, there was the usual last-minute rush of customers. As the assistant manager locked the entrance, a young hippy type showed up. "Sorry, son, we're closing," said the assistant.

"Just have to get one thing," answered Jonathan Martin. He fumbled at something in his jacket pocket.

"Too late, I'm --" There was a buzz, a flash, and the assistant manager slumped to the floor. Martin stepped over him.

"Okay, everybody, freeze! You cashiers -- empty the drawers!"

Several blocks away, at the Midtown South headquarters, Lieutenant Robinson Crosby heard a tap at his window. He turned to see a dark-clad masked man on his windowsill. He opened the window. "Hazardman? What are you doing here? By rights I ought to arrest you."

The Hazardman climbed through the window. "I know, I know -- the warrant. Bingo, I need your help."

Crosby frowned. The vigilante seldom put his requests that bluntly. "What's wrong?" The Hazardman indicated his empty holster. "Don't tell me you lost that thing?"

The Hazardman grimaced. "At that antique shop thing Thursday night. Thought maybe the investigators had picked it up."

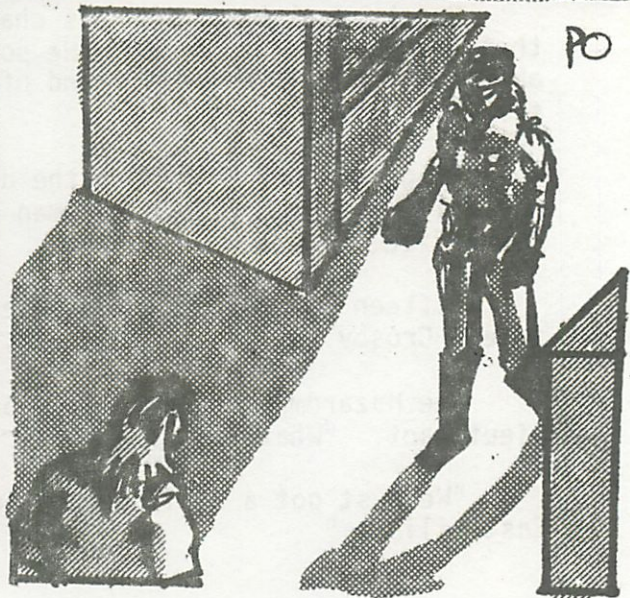
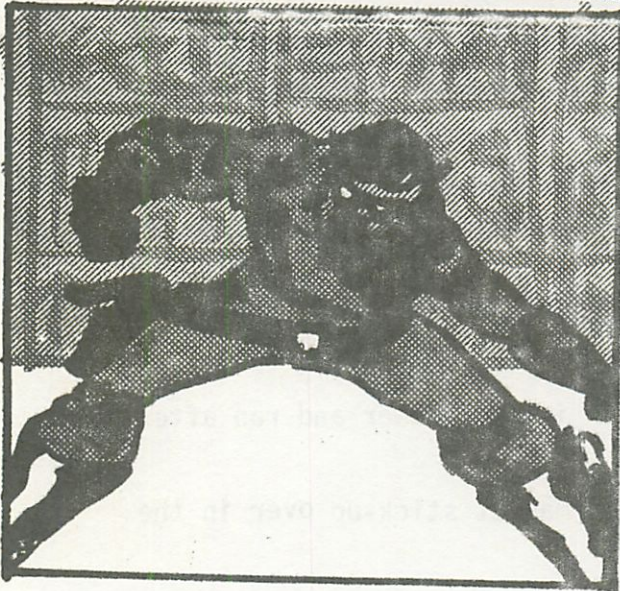
Crosby sank back into his chair and rubbed his chin. "I thought that had your marks on it." He pondered. "No, I haven't heard anything about a weapon like yours...and officially I can't just go poking into somebody else's files."

He got up and walked to the door. "However, I can look the other way while you do." The Hazardman grinned and followed the cop out of the office.

Fifteen minutes later, as the Hazardman poured over Property Office files, Crosby burst into the room. "Hazardman, come with me!"

The Hazardman shoved a file back into a drawer and ran after the lieutenant. "What's up, Bingo?"

"We just got a call about a supermarket stick-up over in the East Village."



"What's that got to do with me?"

Crosby jumped into his car and motioned the Hazardman in. "The report says he's using an unusual weapon -- a pistol that stuns people." The Hazardman jumped in.

"Let's roll!"

A siege atmosphere existed at the supermarket, with police cars and policemen all around it. Traffic on Second Avenue was being rerouted. Save for the cops and the gunman in the store, the area was deserted. Lieutenant Crosby screeched his car to a stop at the edge of the mass of patrol cars and they jumped out. A police captain ran up. "Crosby, what are you doing he-- the Hazardman! Crosby, what do you think you're doing?"

Crosby put his hands up and stopped the captain. "Hold it, sir. We think that's the Hazardman's gun the stickup man's got. As soon as I figured that out, I - uh - picked him up on the way here."

The captain put his hands on his hips, one carefully close to his holster. "Okay, Crosby. But keep him clear."

Across the intersection, a sergeant with a bullhorn was talking to the gunman. "Martin, Martin, throw out the gun and come out. We won't hurt you, we just want to talk." Hearing that, the Hazardman scowled.

"Something wrong, pal?" asked Crosby.

"The crook's name is Martin?"

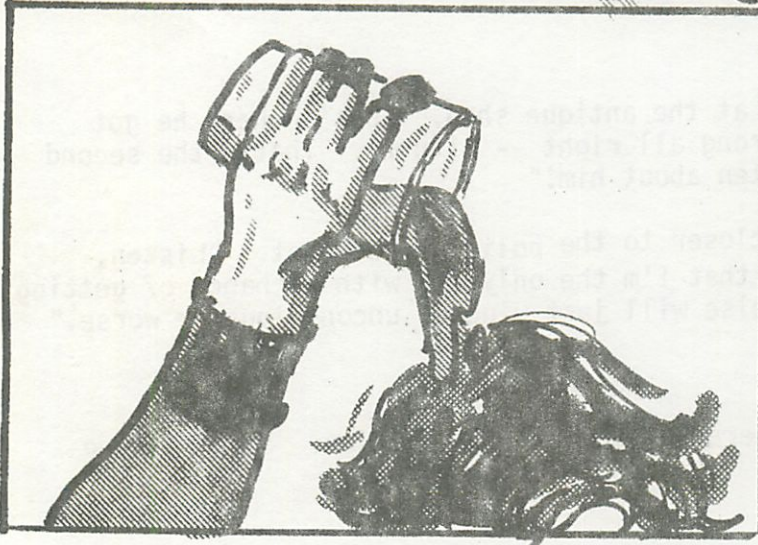
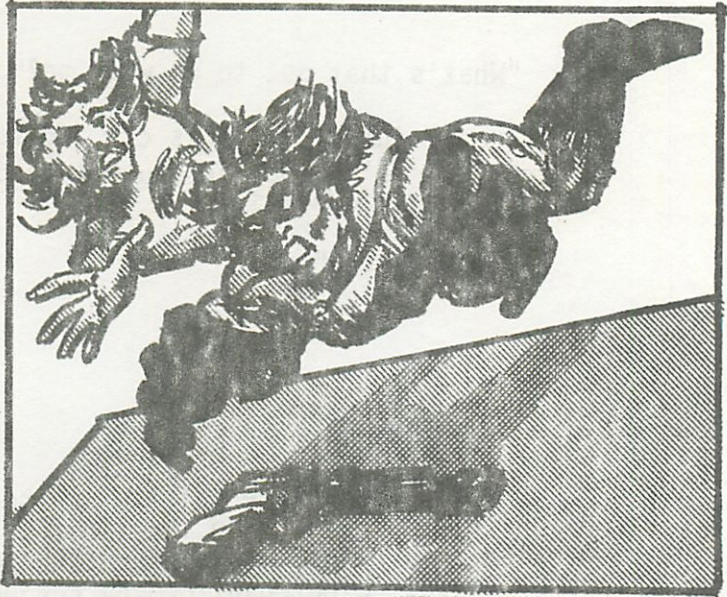
"Yeah."

"He worked for Karakis at the antique shop. That's where he got the pistol. Something's wrong all right -- with me. That's the second time this week I've forgotten about him!"

The Hazardman leaned closer to the police lieutenant. "Listen, Bingo, you and I both know that I'm the only one with a chance of getting him out of there. Anyone else will just wind up unconscious or worse."

"So?"

"So keep him busy up here." The Hazardman got up. "I'm heading around the back."



PO

At the rear of the supermarket, the Hazardman pulled out the grappling line and used it to reach the roof. He moved toward the center of the building and took out the vibro-blade. He used the alien knife to cut a hole in the roof and dropped through. He hit the floor as quietly as a cat and crept forward, 'til he was immediately behind the row of cash registers near the front of the store. On the other side of the check-out counters stood Martin, watching the police through the windows.

"Martin!"

The robber turned swiftly at the voice behind him, bringing the disruptor pistol to bear on the Hazardman. "How'd you get in here?" he asked.

"Trade secret."

Martin hefted the pistol. "I suppose you'd like this back?"

The Hazardman stepped forward. "Well, it is mine, after all." Martin seemed unnerved by the vigilante's casual attitude. When the Hazardman took yet another step forward, he fired the pistol.

In a motion swift as lightning, the Hazardman brought the glowing, humming knife up and caught the disruptor beam on its blade. Martin's jaw dropped, and the vibro-blade left the Hazardman's hand, knocking the pistol out of the criminal's grip.

Both men dived for the weapon as it skidded across the floor. The Hazardman was quicker and he kicked it still further out of reach. Then he straightened up, catching Martin's jaw with his fist.

EPILOGUE

Christopher Sheridan and Caroline McAllister lounged on the couch in Chris' apartment, their arms around each other and drinks in easy reach. She turned to him and smiled mischievously. "Chris," she asked, "how did you know that the vibro-blade could block the disruptor beam?"

Chris picked up his drink, took a sip, kissed her lightly on the cheek, and grinned sheepishly. "I didn't, 'til this evening. I'd never tried it."

She dumped her drink over his head.

IMAGES/SEGW

In the secret centers of the heart the man faces many things. Rarely, if ever, has he been forced to face himself so drastically as in this 'life before my eyes' moment preceding violent death. He considers all those undone things which should have been done. He has noticed them before and even confessed to them under stress. Intellectually, he has always known that they would eventually catch up with him, but he had thought to rob them of meaning and substance.

Images appear in his mind: the mother, who understood the wrenching of his soul; the father, who garnered respect; the friend, who became an extension of self; another, who brought the infinite diversity which gives life spice; unrequited lovers and enemies -- these are the beings he has tried to ignore.

He knows certain disciplines of mind and body that should facilitate a final suppression of these things and give a truly dignified meaning to the end of his existence. He arranges his thoughts just so, and NOW... but, no.

The moments before an ending stretch themselves into infinity. With his thoughts now arranged in a logical order he must consider and deal with them. (His perceptions return to the physical world. No more than he could escape the rope, the spears, the death, can he escape the heart's reminiscences.)

There is a life about to end. With a detached, clinical air that by its very sincerity is not spurious, he reviews that life -- and sees its good. The conclusion amazes him, and he is astonished by his own amazement. Now, he would hold back the denouement for just a short time, just long enough to look once again at the too-few, but incontrovertible, moments in his life when he could share and did love. But there is no more time.

The now mercifully swift end comes. Pain and panic lance swiftly through him to be disintegrated in the bright-calm of his mind and heart.

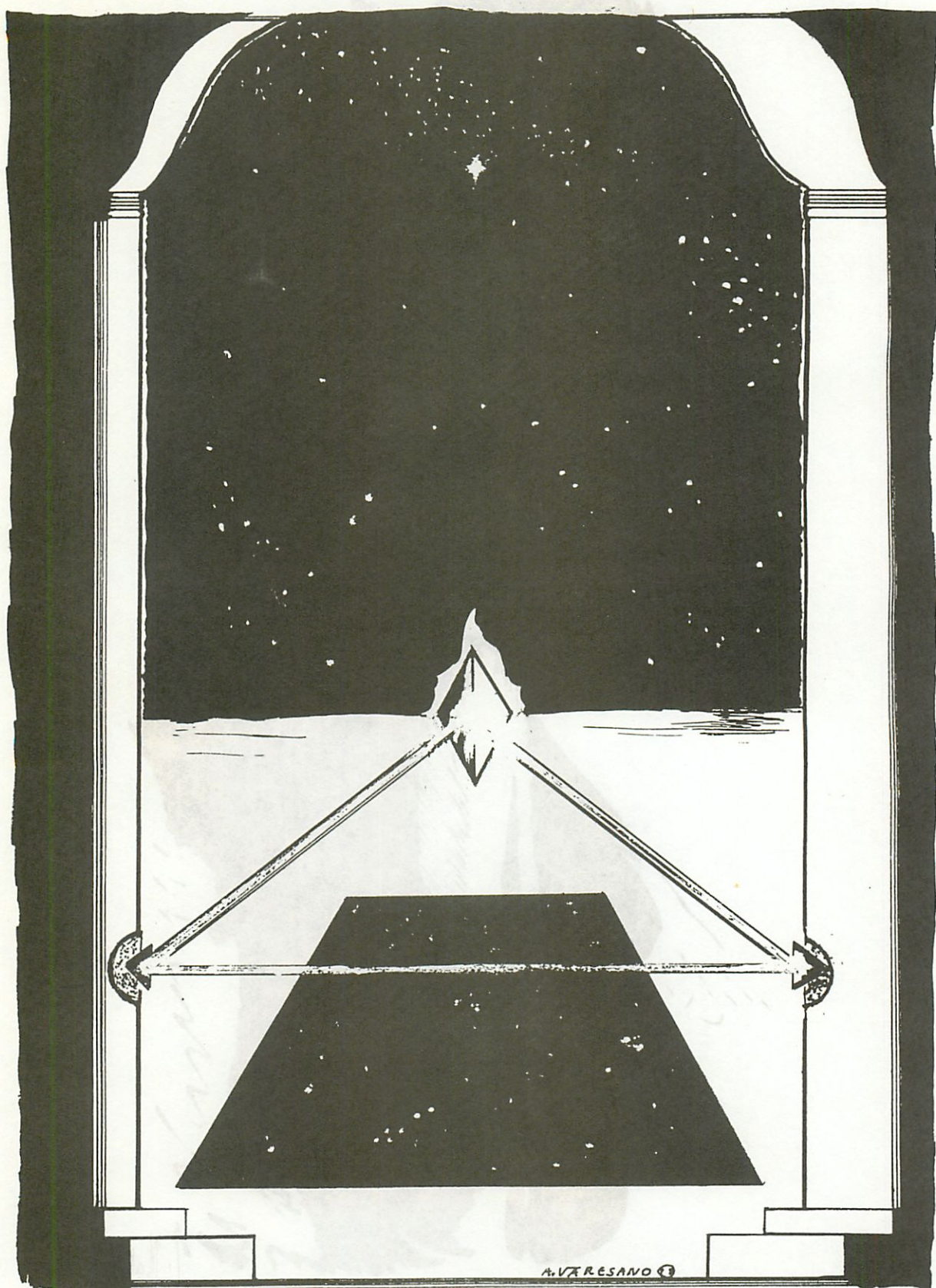
And the body, constructed by an evolutionary process designed to allow a minimum of moisture to escape, releases tears of relief and joy.

art fantasy by jeanne matthews
interpretation by jean l. stevenson



IMAGES

J. Matthews
Co 77



"The Book of the World"

THE BOOK OF THE WORD

Given by the Lords of Kobol

Excerpts

Comprising:

The Golden Chapter

The Chapter of the Laws
of Kobol

The Chapter of Leading

The Chapter of Forming
the Holy House

Deciphered and translated
by
Angela-marie Varesano

*The Book of the Word
Given by the Lords of Kobol*

THE GOLDEN CHAPTER

*The origin of things is Mystery.
Hidden is the beginning within three Veils.*

*In the Spirit of Mystery all beings dwell—
Origin and Ending
Source and Termination
Leading beyond time,
Overflowing all boundaries.*

*The Primal is Unity.
The Second is the Creating.
The Third is like a crystal, receiving and shaping Light.*

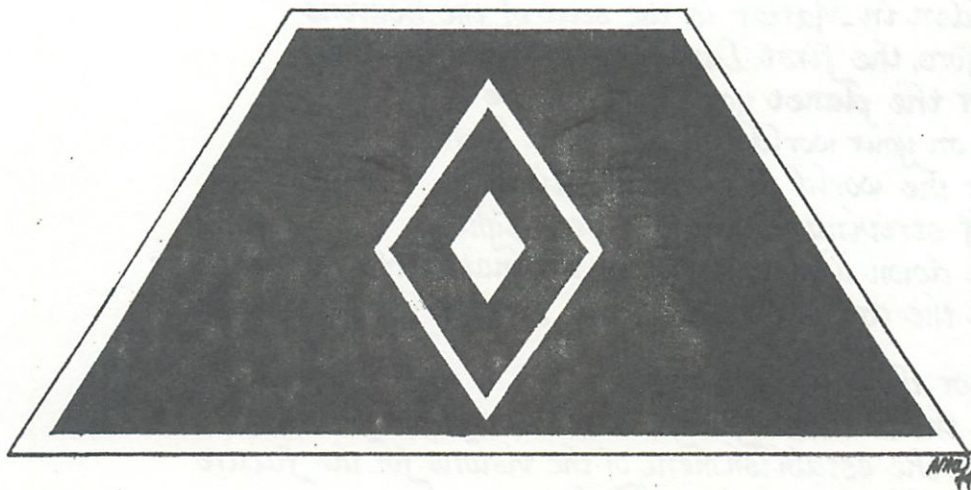
*The Three are covered —
The wings of Night and Time
The wings of Irridescence
The wings of Brilliance cover them.
Yet the intelligence whose heart
Has become like the crystal of Kobol
Knows with the whole of being what cannot be placed in words.*

*Look to the signs that speak by transforming,
The symbols that resonate the Spirit of Life:
The Leading-Star generates a triangle of light*

Whose points are guarded by the Watchers.
The 'Strong and Just One' and the
'Compassionate King' are their names.
The Iriad rests on Balance - thus rule in wisdom!
Embrace it as a most potent strength.
Search the heavens and be guided by its harmony -
So will you lead those who are your trust,
So will you be to them as a guiding star.

Listen ~ in stillness the Crystal is revealed.
In stillness the Crystal receives the Point of Light.
In silence the stars dawn within.

Thus truly art thou blessed
And become the Lords of Kobol.



THE CHAPTER OF THE LAWS OF KOBOL

These are the Ten Lights of Creation
Born of Limitlessness and Absolute Limitlessness:
The Brilliance, encompassing all
The Light of Wisdom, which is 'Existence'
The Light of Understanding that terminates darkness

The Light of Mercy and the Light of Justice
The Light of Harmony which is like unto the suns
The Light of Love and the Light of Intelligence
The Light of Life which is for all beings.
The Nine Lights culminate in the Tenth, forming Matter.

Honor the Laws of the Ten and the Twelve
So will you grow into congruence with the Created.

The Laws of the Limitlessness are veiled
Yet there may come those whose souls,
Having become one with the Ten Lights,
Can venture further.
What lies beyond Brilliance cannot be written.

Yet the Laws of the Ten are for all beings and for all creatures.
Live by them
That by such living you may evolve.

- ① Hidden in Matter is the seed of the heavens
Therefore, the first Law is this:
Honor the planet you use as home —
It is on your world you will first learn to serve.
Honor the world as a living being,
Itself striving within the Ten Lights.
Bend down and learn from the matter of your earth —
Touch the consciousness of the Lender-of-Substances.
- ② Honor the Radiance of Life
And the dreams of Life which comprise growth.
Learn the establishment of the visions for the future
For by this growth is guided.

A blessing they are, and a treasure of surpassing value.
Seek the rhythms inherent in the created,
Unlock the rhythms of cycles -
The Living Radiance knows a tide
Not marked by human time.

③ Honor the Radiance of Intelligence
That the stars be not fearsome to you.
Seek to draw deep from the Mind of minds
Which is an increasing glory.
So will all knowledge be opened to you in time.

④ Honor the Radiance of Love.
Like the nourishment of primal oceans is this Radiance,
This Radiance in whose power be blessed! those who learn to love
Without thought of self,
In whose power be blessed! those whose love overflows
Into the shaping of beauty.

⑤ Honor the Balancing Radiance.
Vast is the universe
And great the Lamps of Creation.
How shall you know which Light to draw upon?
How shall you know the secret of retrieval
And survive the Ten Flames?
Seek to know Primal Harmony underlying the created.
In the inmost and the infinite spaces is This found.

⑥ Honor the Radiance of Justice.
Severe is this Light to the wrong-doing ones
But more severe still is the penalty for refusing to follow the Law.
The Justice exacts payment from each,
Yet you of the inheritance of Kobol will know this Light
As a strength.

⑦ Honor the Law of Mercy.
Lend will to will
That there may be an evolving for you
And for life throughout the worlds.
Justice you must channel, to live in peace;

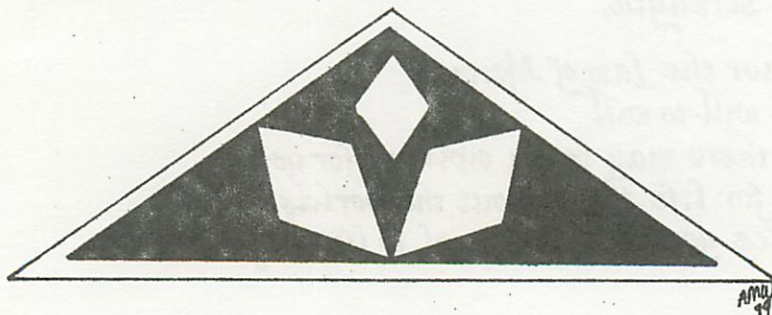
In the fury of war, forget not! that Peace is your ending.
Dwell with Peace in all your actions ~
Thus shall you strive to live as the Great Ones of Kobol,
Established in Strength and unshakable Compassion.

⑧ Honor the Radiance of Understanding,
For this is one of the Oldest of the Lights.
Dark-seeming is the Light which decrees endings,
The Light which rules Eternity and Time,
But you shall remember that void holds stars.
Seek to understand that which is within the reach of your mind,
That you may pass beyond into increasing comprehension.

⑨ Honor the Radiance of the Future,
For this is the Law of Wisdom.
Holy is the new influx
The breath of creation!
This is the Transformer,
The thrust of evolution.

⑩ At the end, and at the beginning
Honor the Brilliance.
From Oneness were the stars and the worlds formed,
From Oneness, the spaces and the unnamed.
Do remember always
This Unity is thy heritage
And unto Unity will there be a returning.

These are the Laws of the Creating Lights
Which are for the Children of Kobol
The known and unknown
The countless beings.



THE CHAPTER OF THE LEADING

Upon you that bear the symbols of authority
Passed through the Lords of Kobol for the
guidance of intelligent life.
Is the burden laid.

You are to be
As the Twelve Lights of Creation,
As the Twelve gatherings of stars around
the homeworld sky.

Call thou unto you the ancient triad.

Obtain unto the meaning of the Crystal.

Live always as a sacred stone to all beings.

May you be established in Peace and
Strength forever.

THE CHAPTER OF FORMING THE HOLY HOUSE

Children of the race of humankind
Children of the Rulers of Kobol
Know that your duty and your legacy it is
To seek the Hidden Mystery.

This is how you shall proceed.
Keep aside a place and a dedicated time for the communing.
No sacrifice do the children of the stars make
Except the sacrifice of time and the gift of lives well led.
Yet make of your place a haven of beauty,
In the traditions of our ancestors,
That your soul may rejoice and sing.

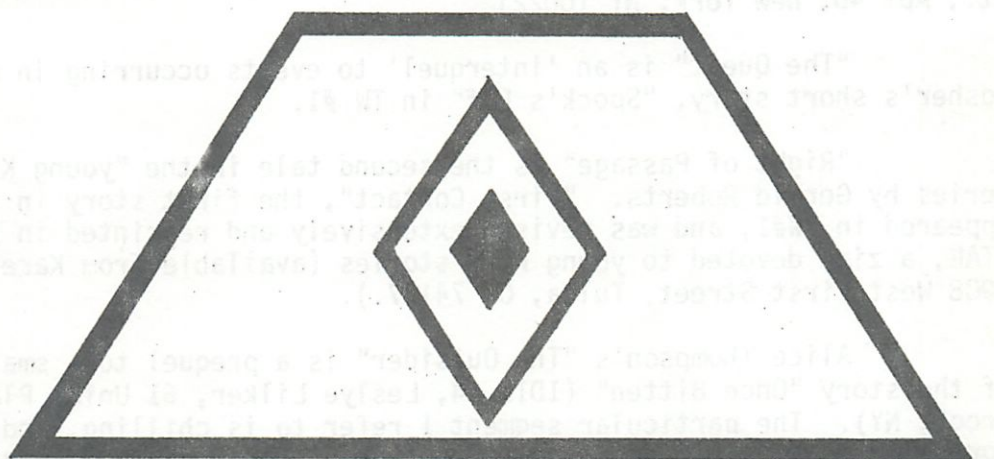
Here you shall seek in your inmost depths,
Being guided by the Receptive Waiting, which is called
Patience,
And the Active Waiting, which is called gratefulness.
For are you not born of the stars?
And does not your life call kindship with the Growing?
This is the Law of Life.

Remember in this time the prayers taught from of old,
And the Laws which become prayers.
Wisdom, knowledge, and guidance are the greatest
beneficences.
Turn to Harmony as a child to an Elder, as a planet
to its sun.

Children of Kobol, can you trust the Unseen Presence?
Look to the things you can see,
And penetrate to the Great Unrevealed,
Revealing through all the created.

Trusting to the Unrevealed Revealing,
Can you live renewed?

Thus is the perfect Crystal known ~
It is clear and serene
And allows through it
Unimpeded
The light of suns.



And '79

POSTSCRIPT, & such

Whew! the job is finally over! *Do you know*, she asked curiously, *how many times I came this close to committing suicide -- or at the least, homicide -- over this zine?* Missed deadlines, lost artwork, writer's block, uncooperative typewriter, tempermental printing equipment, complete overhauls in contents, last minute changes in lay-out... this poor fanzine has had 'em all.

What can I say to those of you who have so patiently waited for your copies of TW#2? Nothing. Except, Thank you. Thank you for your faith and encouragement. It gave me the strength to do my best.

AFTERWORD ON THE STORIES

Several of the stories presented in TW#2 are parts of a series or are in some way related to other stories, novels, etc. You may be interested in knowing where to go for more adventures of someone you've met in these pages, so...

"Brothers" is, of course, the latest entry in the *Nu Ormenel* cycle. God, but Fern Marder and Carol Walske can create universes! I am very proud to have been chosen to present what is, in essence, one of the kingpin stories in the cycle -- the story that sets into motion many other stories... Those of you who are new to *Nu Ormenel* are advised to send an SASE to Fern and Carol for information on their reprint zines, on the names and addresses of other zines carrying *Nu Ormenel* stories, and on their two (soon to be three) novels. (Fern Marder, 342 East 53rd St., Apt 4D, New York, NY 10022)

"The Quest" is an 'interquel' to events occurring in Elspeth Mosher's short story, "Spock's Elf" in TW #1.

"Right of Passage" is the second tale in the "young Kirk" series by Gerald Roberts. "First Contact", the first story in the series, appeared in TW#1, and was revised extensively and reprinted in RISING STAR, a zine devoted to young Kirk stories (available from Karen Fleming, 6908 West First Street, Tulsa, OK 74127.).

Alice Thompson's "The Outsider" is a prequel to a small segment of the story "Once Bitten" (IDIC #4, Leslye Lilker, 61 Union Place, Lynbrook, NY). The particular segment I refer to is chilling, and well worth the read. IDIC #4 is now out of print, and I do not think Leslye is planning a reprint. If you've not read Alice's story, borrow a friend's copy of this fanzine.

Pat O'Neill's "Hazardman" series is a new departure for ST zines... and presents a new hero. Do let Pat know if you like his fan-
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tasy creation.. Pat is presently working on a new Hazardman adventure, "H is for Hostage... and Hazardman."

Angela Varesano's poetry cycle is magnificent -- and shows what *could* be developed from BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, if the show were given even half a chance to really work up to its potential. Angela has several other "translations", these of the sacred works of the Jedi, in TIME WARP 3, the STAR WARS special issue.

BLURBLES

RHIP. Or, in this case, the editor can hype her own work in her own zine.

RIGHT OF STATEMENT is a letter/review zine in the tradition of HALKAN COUNCIL. Bimonthly. #3/4 now available. #5 due in March. Six issues \$3.50, including postage.

TIME WARP #1. Revised reprint. Features "The Cytherean Cycle", a novella nominated for Fan Writing award in 1978. \$3.75 fourth, \$5.50 first class postage/handling.

TIME WARP #3. Now available. STAR WARS "Special Issue" featuring a "Thousand Worlds cycle" story by Maggie Nowakowska. \$4.75 fourth class, \$6.50 first class postage/handling.

PERN PORTFOLIO #1. Reprints available April 1979. Called by critics: "surely one of the most beautiful fanzines ever produced." For McCaffrey/dragon lovers. \$4.75 fourth, \$6.50 first class postage/handling.

& NOTE: The editor can also blurble and hype her friends' zines, as so:

MASIFORM D #8. Now available from Poison Pen Press, 627 East 8th St, Brooklyn, NY 11218. \$2.00 fourth/\$3.75 first class.

EEL BIRD BANDERS' BULLETIN #2. Available from Joyce Yasner, 140 Cadman Plaza West, Brooklyn, NY 11201. \$1.75 fourth/\$2.50 first class.

GUARDIAN. #1 out of Print. SASE to Linda Deneroff, 716 Beverly Road, Brooklyn, NY 11218 or Cynthia Levine, 140 Broadway, C-6 Lynbrook, NY 11563. #2 planned for the spring.

WARPED SPACE. The most frequently produced zine in ST fandom. T'Khutian Press, 5132 Jo Don Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823. SASE.

MENAGERIE. *Always* worth a look-in. boojums Press, 507 Locust St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. \$1.65 including first class postage. SASE.

SKYWALKER. The dean of SWARS zines. #2 now available from Bev Clark, 1950 Cooley Ave. #5306, Palo Alto, CA 94303. \$5.20 Book rate insured/\$6.00 first class/\$7.25 overseas.

SEHLAT'S ROAR #5 (a very charming "crew special") and FALCON'S LAIR #1 (an ST/SWARS/SF zine) are both available from Randy Ash, 29409 Aspen Drive, Flat Rock, MI 48134. SR, including a lovely Faddis poster and a Vulcan wildlife calendar supplement is \$3.72 third/\$4.34 first -- and is a bargain at the price. (Hint. I strongly recommend aficiandos of *The Weight* to get this zine. There's an article there that -- but, heck, that'd be telling.) FL is about the same price; again, a bargain. SASE for exact price info.

GALACTIC DISCOURSE #2 may still be available from Laurie Huff, 208 West Crow, Eureka, IL 61530. \$4.36 book/\$5.00 UPS/\$6.00 first class. Excellent graphics.

THE OTHER SIDE OF PARADISE #4 and THE TIME OF SURAK are in the planning stages from Amy Falkowitz, 323 Higdon, Mt. View, CA 94041. SASE.

FUTURE WINGS is a delightfully charming (not to mention titillatingly risqué and at times downright naughty!!!) fanzine from the Great North. From Cpl. Jeannette Eilke, CFB Chatham, Curtis Park, N.B., EOC 2E0, Canada. I've lent my copy out, so am unable to give a price -- but \$5.00 sounds about right. Send a self-addressed envelope with 15¢ in coin (US stamps do not go over too well with the Canadian government!) to Jeannette. If you have #1, send an SAE and the coins anyway. FUTURE WINGS FLYBY (#2) is in the works. FUTURE WINGS highlights the slightly wacky talents of Hans Dietrich (no, Virginia, not den Hauptman from the Afrikas Korps -- damn!!) and Carrie Rowles.

CAPTAIN UHURA is now available from Mpingo Press, PO Box #206, New Rochelle, NY 10804. I've not seen this yet, but judging by GODDESS UHURA, this is most probably THE definitive Uhura story told to date. I definitely urge an SASE to reserve a copy. Also, due later this year from Mpingo Press is PROBE 13. This is scheduled to be the last issue of PROBE, and promises to be an excellent one.

ODDMENTS

Friends are great -- and are even more worthy of confinement in a mental institution than the editor. What, after all, is their reason for putting up with all the headaches concomittant with this job? We've gone through my reasons for putting up with this insanity (what's that? you didn't read my editorial? You naughty creature! And after all my hard work.Go. Read. I'll wait. Not patiently, but I will wait. Much too much later --) already. What's their excuse? Particularly:

Barbara Wenk, without out whom I'd still be collating; Regina Gottesman and Linda Deneroff, for typing above and beyond the call of duty; Devra Langsam and Joyce Yasner, tea and sympathy; Roz, a herculean task successfully accomplished; Angela and Allyson, I don't believe we did it! Richard, a behind the scenes wonder; all my very patient contributors and suscribers; and many others, too numerous to mention. Thanks, guys, all of you, whether singled out or not.

Support your local fanzine editor's habit. Feed his ego-boo hunger with a LOC!!

FUTURE ISSUES, or, "Yes, Barbara, there *will* be a MIRROR WORLDS."

If you want TIME WARP 4, please submit. One of the reasons TIME WARP #2 is a year late in arriving is that I had a great deal of trouble with submissions. Stories promised never materialized, or proved to be unsuitable for this publication, or for some other reason... just weren't. I will not make the mistake of taking pre-orders or of promising publication by a certain date, but I will say this -- TIME WARP #4 will be printed ASAP. Translation? As soon as I have sufficient material on hand to warrant a print run.

What type of submission am I looking for? Look at any issue of TIME WARP. Stories, vignettes, poetry, articles, essays, art. If I like it, I'll print it. TREK and SWARS are the major emphasis (yes, I intend to continue printing SWARS material. The amount of SWARS material I get will determine whether I print it in alternate zines or incorporate it into my regular issues. And since I'm typing this 4:07 am after a full week of all night printing, I *know* that doesn't make sense. To recapitulate. If I get a few SWARS pieces for my next issue, that issue will be mixed, TREK/SWARS predominating with a varied mixture -- GALACTICA, MAN FROM ATLANTIS, SF and fantasy -- for the remainder. If I get many pieces, I will repeat my present insanity and bring out a TREK/mixed media zine AND a SWARS zine. My druthers? Well, I am rather partial to TIME WARP 3.) but I am interested in any fully developed universe -- even if it's your own.

MIRROR WORLDS and THE CYTHEREAN CYCLE are still in the works. As of this date, I have no projected date of publication. I have received several submissions for MW, and there are one or two stories projected for this special issue, but there is still room for YOUR submission. Note the title of the zine specifies "worlds." While I prefer stories dealing with the alternate universe we saw in "Mirror, Mirror", I'll consider any well-written piece on any viable alternate reality. As for CYTHEREA, see my editorial in this issue. As soon as Lareesha and I settle just who has the controlling vote, CC will be published. I am no longer accepting orders for MIRROR WORLDS and CYTHEREA, however. I had been accepting "pre-publication orders" at \$2.50 (as part of a "special Offer") or \$3.00. As you can see, my zines have a habit of growing. If I accept any more pre-orders, I'll *really* be ready for the poor house.

Speaking of which -- if you ordered TIME WARP 2 by mail, chances are you placed your sub over one year ago. You would, therefore, have paid \$2.50 or 3.00 for a \$5.00 zine. Moreover, the postage was grossly underestimated. I will do my best to absorb these losses -- you do, after all, deserve some consideration for your patience -- BUT... if you can help at all, at least with the extra postage, 'twill be everlastingly appreciated. Some of you have helped already, and a future RIGHT OF STATEMENT will extend my thanks properly. For the rest of you -- I don't think they allow pubbing equipment in the poor house.

Anything else? Oh yes. My bacover. THAT, my dears, is the illo that spawned a fanzine of its own. Seems Amy Falkowitz *believed* me when I said I liked dragons and wanted an illo of one. I saw this, and wrote back, "Why not "Why not do me a whole portfolio of dragon illos?" So she did. THEN I said... anywho, the end result was PERN PORTFOLIO, a McCaffrey zine.

SPECIAL PREVIEW

TIME WARP 3 promises to be an outstandingly good issue. A *STAR WARS* special issue, it features excellent fiction and poetry by some of the most gifted fen in fandom.

A TALE OF TWO LUKES, by Maggie Nowakowska. Illustrated by Pam Kowalski.

Luke's introduction to Cergaelugos, the Whillish being whose appointed (self-appointed?) task it is to write the True History of the Young Jedi Knight. Luke does not approve. A "Thousand Worlds Cycle" story.

THE CININNATUS CAPER, by Anne Elizabeth Zeek. Illustrated by Mary Rosalind Oberdieck-Ludwig.

Han's first meeting with Jabba the Hut, the criminal kingpin who will come to exercise such an important role in his life, with Greedo the Crinlian, Jabba's former ace pilot, and with Antibe, Jabba's -- First Officer?

CATS IN THE DARK, by Joyce Yasner. Illustrated by Hans Dietrich.

Kass Eastad, a resourceful vacationer hi-jacked by an alien slaver ship, effects an escape with the help of a most unusual cell-mate.

SOUVENEIRS OF ALDERAAN, by Sheryl Adsit. Illustrated by Virginia Lee Smith.

Han at his most Han-nish ("I'm here for sentimental reasons," he said. Yeah, he thought, the idea of all that money going to waste makes me wanna cry.) once again performs a great service for the Alliance.

THE JEDI MASTER, by Angela Marie Varesano. Illustrated by Angela Marie Varesano.

A poetry cycle translated from the works of Master Jedi Obi Wan Kenobi.

Also: stories and vignettes by Karen Osman, Andrina Lewis, others;

Poetry by Fern Marder, Susan Matthews, Karen Hill, Rebecca Greenberg, Angela Marie Varesano.

Art by Kathy Carlson, Pat O'Neill, Carrie Rowles, Fern Marder, Colleen Winters, others.

